

NO MORE EMPTY SEATS

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ABSTRACT

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San Bernardino Community Seventh-day Adventist Church, where I am the pastor, is full not only of unrealized potential but also of too many empty pews. Its beautiful sanctuary for 400, regularly receives barely 30. The attendees are resourceful, well resourced, and willing to serve. Yet the surrounding community and four nearby schools are less known for church-attending potential than for poverty, crime and low education. A plan was needed to bridge the chasm between the church and the community with ministry actions and choices that are showcased through the Trinity of Ministry model where people are led, evangelized and disciplined across barriers of alienation and social and spiritual distances.

Previously, I had been a pastor in three different churches in as many cities. Finally, I had returned to a city that I loved and that had been my initial staging point into a career in ministry. It was an honor to be asked to become Senior Pastor. Everything was going well at the prominent church that I had been serving at in Riverside. My family loved it there, and the decision to leave was a major one. People often ask why I chose to leave a prominent church in Riverside for a smaller, less prominent one in San Bernardino. My answer is always the same: POTENTIAL. I saw, felt, and heard the word time and again. Three major sources of potential revealed themselves in San Bernardino: the Campus, the community, and the congregation. However, barriers including church decline, the perception of the San Bernardino community, and the willingness of the

congregation to buy into a vision of self-renewal and change were also present. *I felt as if I had the ministerial competencies to help the church reach its potential and make it to be a model church around the world.* “No More Empty Seats” illustrates how empty pews in many churches, primarily Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America, can be filled with ministry that chooses to realize the potential, to confront the barriers, and become a model church.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. —Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV

The Unrealized Potential

Sunday, November 13, 2016 was when the journey began. In another few weeks, it would be the first anniversary of a December 2015 terrorist attack that would forever link the name of San Bernardino to that modern form of misbegotten horror. Previously, I had been a pastor in three different churches in as many cities, but now, finally, I was returning to a city that I loved and that had been the launching pad of my career as a minister. This was *my* San Bernardino, not the distortion some had made of it. Yet, while the San Bernardino of my return was faithful to the image of it I had from before, the church I was coming to had no such handy file in my memory. Although I had grown up in Los Angeles, the San Bernardino area (only a one hour, one minute drive away) was foreign to me. I was more familiar with Texas, having studied there for seven years, and began to know California’s “Inland Empire” only after I came to work in vast San Bernardino County, an area larger than several American states. That is when my love for San Bernardino began.

Circling back took eleven years. It was 2005 when I obtained my first ministerial position as a Youth Pastor at 16th Street Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in San Bernardino. My stay there lasted six years and then it was on to Palm Springs in 2011, where I became senior pastor of a small church that attracted me partly because of its

potential for growth. And grow it did. Over a period of four years membership rose tenfold from 20 to 200. From there, I was invited to become Executive Pastor of a church in Riverside. The church was very prominent but my stay there turned out to be a brief fifteen months. It was in the ninth month of this tenure that the possibility of a return to San Bernardino Community SDA came. The initial offer was for a three-month temporary posting. After that period expired, I was asked to stay on as the permanent pastor. My eleven-year round-trip journey was complete.

The Well-Resourced Campus

San Bernardino Community SDA has one of the best facilities in all of San Bernardino, particularly in terms of its size and location. The sanctuary is beautiful! Its colors are burgundy and gold. It seats about 400 people in three rows with short pews on the side and long pews in the middle, and has vaulted ceilings with stained glass windows. There is a choir loft and a baptistery, as well as a stage with two levels. The lighting is suitable for televising events and the sound system is good. With all of these good things, there is room to make the sanctuary even better. Installing a camera system could give the church an online presence. Adding a mother's room could make church attendance more convenient for mothers, who crucially affect church growth. The lobby could be made more inviting, the fellowship hall more modern, and the board room given a look and feel more true to its name.

On the campus and apart from the sanctuary is a chapel that can seat an additional 100 people. Like the sanctuary, the chapel also has a stage. Events such as weddings and youth programs could make good use of the chapel space. It could also serve as an overflow space for the sanctuary. Its current use is limited to Sunday worship services

held there by a Spanish-language congregation. The space is rented out Sundays because the host SDA's worship services are held the day before.

In addition, a library gives the campus a feel of education and scholarship, a sense already suggested by four surrounding schools and a university only 10 minutes away. Beyond the knowledge in its books, the library gives visitors the knowledge that San Bernardino SDA greatly values and advocates for education. Additionally, students might make use of the library to study, use the available computers, and receive tutoring all at the same time.

The four classrooms that dot the campus are currently used for early morning Bible study for the young people. They offer additional potential for use in an after school program. One of the classrooms stores several steel drum musical instruments, also known as "pans." Steel drums originated on the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago and helped to spread the sound of calypso all over the world. On the islands, small groups or large ensembles of pan musicians lead the street parades marking the annual pre-Lenten carnival celebrations. In San Bernardino, the San Bernardino SDA Steel Drum Band had also hit the street, except for a different purpose. This band had once travelled the world for the gospel, making little tipped hammers draw Caribbean gospel tunes from metal chiseled grooves on an open-ended, concave section of a metal drum. Those years had passed, and the band had not been functioning with any consistency for several years. Clearly, there was potential to restore the band's unique aspect to the mission of the church.

A huge parking lot adorns the property, but is in visible need of paving and painting for demarcated parking spaces. When not in use as a parking space, and with

proper maintenance, the space could double as the grounds for a community carnival. Two church vans could transport people from home to church and back.

An open field sits between the sanctuary and the education wing. It contains a children's play area with a sandbox, a tunnel, swings and grass meant to be played on. At night under the stars and assuming favorable weather, this play zone could do double duty as a carless "drive-in" theater for kids, with plenty of safe space for them to sit and enjoy movies.

Lastly, there is the gymnasium. It has a kitchen as well as a community service room for storing food and clothes. There is yet another performance stage, plus a bathroom with showers and entrance to a full-length basketball court. The showers could benefit not only athletes but also any homeless we welcome in the practice of a gospel of sharing a hot shower, fresh clothing, clean underwear, hygienic supplies, bags of food, and neighborliness. The gymnasium was the final hook for me. I could see it hosting basketball and volleyball tournaments and being the setting for socials on the evenings of the Saturday day of worship.

The campus presented all the elements of once having been a school, and its abundance of possibilities for use in ministry was clear. To my mind, the combination of structures, location, and community shouted "potential!"

The Surrounding Community

The church that I pastor, San Bernardino Community Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the heart of the community. Located at the corner of G and 17th, San Bernardino community is just five minutes from downtown and ten minutes from CAL State San Bernardino and less than one mile from four schools: a high school, a middle school, and two elementary schools

Every day, many students walk by the church, many cars drive by it. The church sits right behind San Bernardino High School the first high school in San Bernardino.

San Bernardino is the fourth worst city in America according to Area Vibes. Area Vibes rank cities on major factors.

Amenities, lower scores for fewer nearby amenities like: grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, schools, park, libraries etc.

Cost of living, lower scores for high cost of groceries, health care, having transportation or utilities

Crime Statistics scores for high violent crime and high property crime. Violent crimes are more heavily weighted.

Education: lower scores for low test scores and high student to teacher ratio.

Employment: lower scores for low median household income and high unemployment rates.

Housing: lower scores for high housing price to median household ratio and low appreciation rates.¹

Out of the seven categories, San Bernardino rank high only in the weather. To be specific, the amenities in the city of San Bernardino vary, for my church is located in a “food desert.”²

city-data.com

The cost of living in the state is not comparable to that of people living in the city: 41% of the residents in San Bernardino are below the poverty line compared to 20% for the entire state of California.³

¹ Areavibes.com, “Top 10 Worst Cities in America - Worst Places to Live 2016,” <http://www.areavibes.com/library/worst-cities-in-america/> (accessed April 16, 2018).

² Areavibes.com, “San Bernardino,” <http://www.areavibes.com/san+bernardino-ca/livability/?ll=34.10835+-117.28976> (accessed April 15, 2018).

³ city-data, “San Bernardino, California (CA) Poverty Rate Data,” <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-San-Bernardino-California.html> www.citydata.com (accessed April 15, 2018).

press-enterprise (The Sun)

The crimes in San Bernardino have dropped in 2017. (I will give you a reason later in the document). San Bernardino recorded 63 homicides in 2016, the worst in 20 years.⁴

TownCharts.com

50% of the residents of San Bernardino do not have a high school diploma; only 5% have a Bachelor Degree.⁵

zillow.com

The housing in San Bernardino is too expensive compared to the average family income. The average income is \$38,774 and the average cost of a home is \$256,400.⁶

In 2015, San Bernardino was recognized globally because of the regional shootings that took the lives of 14 people. In 2016, the murder rate skyrocketed. San Bernardino is the biggest county in the world and one of the most violent cities, but “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Romans 5:20).⁷

The Willing Congregation

I pastor a Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant Christian denomination distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the seventh day of the week in Christian and Jewish calendars, as Sabbath, and by its emphasis on the

⁴ Ryan Hagen, “This is How San Bernardino Officials Are Working to Address 2016’s Homicide Surge,” <https://www.sbsun.com/2016/12/31/this-is-how-san-bernardino-officials-are-working-to-address-2016s-homicide-surge/> pressenterprise.com (accessed April 15, 2018).

⁵ TownCharts, “San Bernardino County, California Education Data,” <http://www.towncharts.com/California/Education/San-Bernardino-County-CA-Education-data.html> (accessed April 15, 2018).

⁶ zillow.com, “San Bernardino Home Prices & Values,” <https://www.zillow.com/san-bernardino-ca/home-values/> (accessed April 15, 2018).

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations come from the New King James Version (NKJV).

imminent Second Coming (advent) of Jesus Christ. The denomination grew out of the Millerite movement in the United States during the mid-19th century and was formally established in 1863. Among its founders was Ellen G. White, whose extensive writings are still held in high regard by the church.

Much of the theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church corresponds to common Protestant Christian teachings, such as the Trinity and the infallibility of Scripture. Distinctive teachings include the unconscious state of the dead and the doctrine of an investigative judgment. The church is known for its emphasis on diet and health, its “holistic” understanding of the person, promotion of religious liberty, and its conservative principles and lifestyle.

The world church is governed by a General Conference, with smaller regions administered by divisions, union conferences, and local conferences. It currently has a worldwide baptized membership of over 20 million people, and 25 million adherents. As of May 2007, it was the twelfth-largest religious body in the world, and the sixth-largest highly international religious body. It is ethnically and culturally diverse, and maintains a missionary presence in over 215 countries and territories. The church operates numerous schools, hospitals, and publishing houses worldwide, as well as a humanitarian aid organization known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).⁸

The Distinct History of My Local Church

Eighteen years ago when Valley Fellowship SDA Church moved to Rialto, a group (initially known as Valley Mission) was born out of a vision to continue a ministry in San Bernardino. In January 1990, the Victoria SDA Church graciously opened its doors to us. For two years, it became our home as we considered this our permanent place of worship. In April 1992, we started worshipping at the Waterman facility. It was an ecstatic feeling mixed with some trepidation. The uphill climb was just beginning, but God would be faithful to provide all of our needs.

⁸ *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Seventh-day Adventist Church,” last modified on April 14, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_ChurchWikipedia (accessed April 15, 2018).

The Children's ministry, which has always been an integral part of the group, became one of the catalysts contributing to our survival. A van was purchased to transport the inner city youth weekly to our church. Each summer the children have been sponsored to camp at Pine Springs Ranch and this has proved to be an invaluable experience for these youngsters. For three years, we worshipped at Waterman. This period was clouded by reports that the city would purchase the facility to make a thoroughfare through the property. It was heart breaking that the church had been sold and that it would be demolished and replaced by concrete and asphalt. All that would remain would be the memories of those who struggled in the '70s and early '80s to establish this lighthouse.

Realizing that we could not change the inevitable, we began searching for another place to worship. Again, God blessed us with a quaint little sanctuary (the Allen chapel) on Norman and Foisey. Although cramped for space for the children's programs, our enthusiasm to move forward did not wane. For thirteen months, we led Fellowship there, but realized we had to build or purchase a place of our own.

Through the efforts of Drs. Barker and Newborn, a place was found on Tippecanoe between 4th and 5th streets. The membership rallied to do the necessary work to prepare it for worship. What a grand day that first Sabbath of February 1997 was. As members and friends came to worship, persons playing "When the Saints Go Marching In" on their harmonicas greeted them outside. At last, a place to establish roots. We knew that it was only by the grace of God that we had come this far.

From our inception, various individuals have played key roles in our development: pastors Rodney Pearson, Henry Fuss, Lyndon Parsons, Cheryl and Michael

McMillan. Other Individuals include Drs. Hendricks Edwards, Lynbrook Barker, Lloyd Dayes and Richard Neil. Over the next five years, we developed from an affiliate of the Victoria church to become a company. We finally attained church status in 2002 under the leadership of Drs. Craig Newborn and Clyde Cassimy.

In January 2003, we welcomed Pastor Michael Mupfawa. It again became clear that our church home would allow no room for growth. It was sold and property purchased on 6th street to build our permanent home: or so we thought. As the plans were developed, we rented the Greater Bethel Baptist Church on the Corner of 2nd and Allen streets. Just as the plans were being submitted to the city of Highland for approval, our present location was discovered by one of our youth, Alven Norman. The members rallied with the aid of the conference to purchase the church at 1696 North G Street. A line of credit was secured to complete the necessary repairs.

When I officially arrived at the church 13 years after the purchase of the new building, the average number in attendance was about 30 people. The church is a predominately-black church with people from the Caribbean, Central America, and America. The Church has other nationalities such as Caucasian and Hispanic, but they make up a small minority. Most of the members commute into the area and are well educated professionals. However, we are growing into a church that lives in a community that is not as well educated. Lack of education, violence and poverty are some of the potentials barriers that we face in San Bernardino.

CHAPTER 2 THE SETTING

But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”— Matthew 19:26

Empty Pews

Church attendance throughout Christianity is on the decline. In the 1950s there was a great awakening of religion. However, from the 1960s to the 1970s there was a great decline. Then from the 1980s to the 21st century, things remained steady, but in the past 15 years, the church has been in a great decline. The biggest change has to do with the fact that people are no longer religious or feel that religion isn't all that important. In an article on why is church attendance declining even among committed Christians, Dave Murrow says:

We've all heard how church attendance is declining in America. The religious “nones” are rising in number. Nominal Christians are falling away. But even more disturbing is that fervent believers are becoming irregular in their church attendance, too. (Ask any pastor if this is happening). When my father-in-law was growing up in the Bible belt, you attended church three times a week, 52 weeks a year. You did not miss church unless you had a fever of 102. If you were traveling on Sunday, you were expected to visit a local congregation in your denomination. There was no skipping a Sunday – no sleeping in. Church attendance was the barometer of spiritual health. My generation relaxed the attendance rules a bit – especially if we had to travel or work over the weekend. But we still made it to church almost every Sunday. Our children have become even more casual about weekly worship attendance. I recently interviewed the leaders of a large church in Arizona. They surveyed their young families and discovered they attended church an average of 1.6 times per month (out of a possible 4.3 weekends/month). In addition, only 20% of their members attend at least 3 times a month. In addition, just 4 percent

are “full attenders” like my father-in-law – in the pews at least 48 weeks a year.⁹

Murrow argues that a faithful Christian must go to church every Sunday.

However, he wants to know how churchgoing changed from being foundational to optional in the minds of so many Christians. He offers nine possible reasons:

1 Social expectation and pressures have lightened. People used to live their lives according to social convention. Those who strayed from accepted norms were ostracized and shamed. Churches used this power to “guilt” people into a variety of behaviors, including weekly church attendance. Obviously, this does not work anymore.

2 Church is no longer the best show in town. For centuries, Sunday morning was an entertainment desert. Shops were closed. Sports commenced at noon. There was no cable TV or video games. Church was literally the only thing happening on Sunday morning – so people went. Sunday now presents many attractive options and everyone – including Christians – is taking advantage.

3 Increased mobility. People travel as never before, so more and more churchgoers find themselves out of town on Sunday. Relatively few see the need to visit a nearby church.

4 Weekend work. Blue laws used to keep businesses shuttered on Sunday. Now many people work on the Sabbath, which makes attendance difficult or impossible.

5 People need a day of rest. For stressed-out couples Sunday may be the only pajama morning of the week. Can we blame families for wanting a little downtime with each other? After all, aren’t we supposed to take a Sabbath?

6 The rise of do-it-yourself Christianity. The Internet and various media offerings allow believers to tailor a spiritual life to their own liking. They get Christianity without the challenge of having to interact with other Christians.

7 The expectation of choice. Modern Americans are used to getting exactly what they want. **Amazon.com** offers more than 200 million items. Petco sells more than 100 varieties of dog food. Christians shop for pastors they connect with. Megachurch attendees often have favorite teaching pastors – and will skip a Sunday if “the other guy” is preaching.

⁹ David Murrow, “Why Is Church Attendance Declining – Even Among Committed Christians?” *patheos.com*, March 07, 2016 (accessed April 15, 2018).

8 The most faithful saints are burning out. I know a number of very committed Christians who no longer attend – or do so sporadically – because their churches worked them so hard in the past.

9 Churches increasingly model individuality in weekly worship and teaching. We've trained people to pursue Christ on their own – so that's what they're doing.

Let me spend a little time on that last one. One of the hallmarks of 20th century evangelicalism was the focus on individual unction: personal salvation, a personal relationship with Jesus, personal devotions, etc. Pastors taught people to dig into the Bible themselves; to self-feed by reading Christian books and listening to Christian radio; and to share their faith with others – all without much support from the church.

But, by placing the individual in charge of his own spiritual life, the church unwittingly de-emphasized the importance of community. This produced a generation of spiritual James Bonds – lone wolf agents who imagine themselves serving God without much help from headquarters.

Contemporary worship is feeding the trend. These hip worship services mirror the individualism we see in the wider culture:

- The service has a starting time, but people show up whenever they want to.
- We simply stand or sit as we feel like it. No one tells us when to sit, stand or kneel.
- Many churches have jettisoned the creeds and unison readings.
- Some churches place communion elements on small tables and let folks partake as they “feel led.”
- Many people choose not to sing at all.

We do nothing in unison any more – and we wonder where our unity has gone. We are no longer a body of Christ – functioning together as one, but a collection of appendages and organs each doing its own thing. Is it any wonder why even our most faithful members attend sporadically? Why it is getting harder and harder to get our members to show up and volunteer?

All this individualism is having a corrosive effect on men. People go to church, pick up the scent of individualism, and decide that it is OK to hold congregational life at arms' length. I know a number of very committed Christian men who have turned their backs on weekly worship – not because they are angry or lazy – but because they believe they can serve God better on their own. It started when they skipped a week. Then another. Then another. Nothing bad happened. In fact, sleeping late felt good. Seeing their kids felt even better. But over time they became disconnected from regular Christian fellowship – and their families with them.

Pastors and leaders, as you plan your worship services, ask yourself: how are we modeling teamwork in our services? Are we doing things in unison? Alternatively, are we gathering and letting everyone do his or her own thing?

You may say, “We preach unity all the time!” Good. Start modeling it.”¹⁰

This systemic phenomenon within Christianity can be discerned in my local congregation and in Adventism at large. Thomas Rainer offers seven reasons for why he believes church attendance has been falling. What Rainer calls his “high-level perceptions” for analyzing conditions in one’s own church.

“Cultural Christians” no longer see the need to attend church. “Cultural Christian” is really an oxymoron. I refer here to those men and women who once attended church for social, political, or business reasons. Most of them no longer feel it is necessary to be in church to be a regarded citizen in the community.

Church members are attending less frequently. I have noted in other articles how I see this development as potentially the greatest contributor to attendance decline. Three decades ago, a very active church member attended three times a week. Today we call those who attend three times a month an active church member.

Expectations are lower for church members. One of the reasons church members attend less frequently is that very little is expected of them in many churches. If we expect little of our members, that is exactly what we will get.

Insufficient emphasis on groups. This reality may be one of the most neglected areas of church life. Groups of all kinds – home groups, small groups, Sunday school classes, life groups, and others – are key to assimilation and greater commitment. The importance of groups must begin with the pastor and all other key leaders in the church.

Inward focus. In too many churches, the emphasis is on “me, myself, and I.” Some members are more concerned about the temperature in the worship center than the eternal destinations of their neighbors. The “me-focused” church is on its way to decline.

No clearly defined process of discipleship. Eric Geiger and I reported on this issue in our book, *Simple Church*. Growing churches are much more

¹⁰ Ibid.

likely to have a clearly grasped and implemented process of discipleship than declining churches.

No strategic plans for multi-venues or multi-campus. The trend of multi-venue and multi-campus churches may be the most significant in church practices in the past three decades. Even smaller churches are now planning for more than one site or venue. Those churches not making such plans are more likely to be declining.¹¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church boasts 18 million members worldwide. Nevertheless, leaders recently revealed the denomination has lost one third of its members over the last 50 years.

Additionally, for every 100 people the Adventist church gains, it loses 43 previous members, according to research presented at the denomination's first Summit on Nurture and Retention, and reported by Adventist News Network (ANN).

According to Adventist researcher Monte Sahlin, the main reasons for the low rate of retention are personal problems and experiences. People do not drop out based on the church or its doctrines, but because of personal trouble like marital conflict or unemployment, he told ANN.

Leaders suggested that the Adventist response to how to grow may not be in adding new faces, but rather in taking care of the people who are already there.”¹²

A study on saturation and research by the official archivist for the Seventh-day Adventist Church Academy in 2014 found that more than “half (50.7%) of lapsed and former church members had attended church for five or more years before they left.”¹³

Another study in 2013 by Centuries of Creative Ministry said that “former and inactive Seven-day Adventists listed three top reasons for why they left the church:

No big issue—just drifted away (28%)

¹¹ Thomas Rainer, “Seven Key Reasons Your Church Attendance May Be declining,” [blog], thomasrainer.com, July 01, 2015, <https://thomrainer.com/2015/07/seven-key-reasons-your-church-attendance-may-be-declining>, (accessed February 1, 2018)

¹² Kate Tracy, “Adventist ASSES Why 1 in 3 Members Leave the Church,” *Christianity today.com*, December 09, 2013, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2013/december/seventh-day-adventists-assess-why-1-in-3-members-leave-sda.html> (accessed February 1, 2018).

¹³ Petr Činčala, “The Narrow Road,” *Adventist Review*, December 22, 2016, <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story-the-narrow-road> (accessed April 15, 2016).

Lack of compassion for the hunting (25%)

Moral failure on my part (19%)¹⁴

Yet another study, this one by the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research of the church focused on those events that

Triggered member decisions to leave the Seventh-day Adventist church. The most significant reasons respondents gave for leaving were as follows:

- Perceived hypocrisy
- Marital difficulties
- Lack of funds in the church
- High level of conflict in local congregation
- Family conflicts others than within marriages
- Personal conflict with local church members.

For many Seventh-day Adventist, their local church did not prove a loving and supporting community. When they experienced conflict or difficulties they stopped attending church and often nobody noticed they had left.”¹⁵

Compared to this evidence from Adventism at large, the general factors that are relevant to my local church context include:

1. No big issues just drifted
2. Marital difficulties
3. High level of conflict in local congregation
4. Family conflicts others than within marriages.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Despite all the research done by Dave Murrow, Thomas Rainer and Monte Sahlin, I wanted to do church decline research from within my local church. In a separate polling of San Bernardino SDA that I have conducted, members cite three reasons for why the church has declined:

- Leadership issues
- Inconsistent Evangelism
- Not being able to “disciple” those who may join the church from the community, as well as others who may come from other SDA congregations.

The solutions are evident and call for improving the leadership of the church, innovating programs benefiting the community, and starting small groups and activities to enable people to participate and to grow spiritually together.

The Chasm of Perception

San Bernardino Community is a church not really known to other Seventh Adventist in the Inland Empire. When people think of a black Seventh-day Adventist church in San Bernardino everyone thinks of the Great 16th Street Church, where I started my ministry as a Youth Pastor. I myself did not know much about San Bernardino Community. In fact, the name was changed to San Bernardino Community from Del Rosa SDA Church. I had attended a service there before and preached there, but I did not know much about the church. The perception of the church was not bad, but not one to draw either people or pastors. The perception was 1) that it was not only a small church not only in membership but also an edifice; 2) that although it was in a rough community, the church was not doing anything to reach the community; and 3) that the members were very conservative and did not mingle with any other groups of people besides themselves.

Here are a few things we did to change the perception of the church:

- We improved our communications department. Our communications leader has brought into the vision and mission of the church, and has done a very good job in recruiting young minds to help us be more relevant. One of their first innovative ideas has to do with the way we do announcements in church. In the past someone stands up in front of the church and makes announcements. What they implemented was a newscast, with field reporters to help relay the upcoming events to the church. The first time it was done, it was a slam-dunk! The church really enjoyed it.
- The communications department stepped up our social media presence. We now have an active Facebook page and Instagram account. The pictures are updated and I am putting devotional thoughts and clips for daily encouragements of the saints.
- Our website has been updated as well. This was very important, for when people are interested in visiting your church, one of the first places they look for information about the church is on the website. Our old website was not a good representation of the church. However, the new website is relevant, interactive, colorful, and a much better representation of our church.

A Vision across the Chasm

Anytime a leader steps into a new situation, the leader always has trepidation. I am no different. After spending time in conversation with key leaders, I understood that they had tried many things before in the community but to no avail. There were some concerns with leadership style: how I would relate to the church, the community, and

especially to the young people. So, although there was definitely a barrier, I still truly felt God called me to this church, and since God called, he would take care of all things. It will be a tough road ahead but as the Bible says in Matthew 19:26, “with God all things are possible.”

I took some counsel from an article in Huffington Post on how companies sell in order to sell the vision to the church.

Delivering a compelling pitch is Step 0 in building your company. Whether you are pitching to a customer, an investor, or a potential hire, you need to sell your vision with clarity, passion, and conviction.

OVERVIEW

Explain what you do. Your “Elevator Pitch” should be succinct and powerful. This is where you get their attention or lose it. [When I went before the board, I had practiced the vision and mission and the motto so well, that it was as if I was quoting scripture. They saw the confidence in my presentation.]

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

Explain the problem you solve. Hopefully your product or service is a painkiller, not a vitamin. List statistics that support the opportunity. [I stated the problem that we have in our community, violence, poverty, and low education. Those were shared to help them see why I believe the Lord gave this vision to me.]

SOLUTION

Explain how you are going to solve the problem in a unique and defensible way. How is your solution better? What is your unfair advantage? [The solution that I gave was Jesus. You can never go wrong with that!]

TEAM

Describe why your team is qualified. What have they done in the past that makes them credible? Remember: investors invest in people, not companies. [We did not have the total team formed. However, what we had was what the idea of what kind of team should be compiled to help fulfill the vision and mission.]

MARKET

How big is your addressable market? Do not make the mistake of listing a widely published industry statistic as your addressable market. Conduct a bottom up analysis of your market. If you sell software to health clubs, list how many health clubs exist. List the dollar value that it represents. [As mentioned earlier, our communication/Marketing department really stepped up to the plate.]

SALES, MARKETING + DISTRIBUTION

How do you plan to get money out of your customer's pocket? Explain your sales process. Investors want to know that you have, at the very least, thought through the process. List results for past marketing campaigns and committed distribution partners. [Every Saturday we rehearse the major goals, so the financial obligations are always before us.]

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

List your competitors. Explain why you are better. Never list that you do not have competition. If your product or service is a novel idea, you will want to list alternatives to your offering. If you are building the first personal, commuter helicopter that fits in a garage, your competition would be cars and other commuter airplanes. [In the church, I try not to say that I have any competitors.]

FINANCE

Remember: investors are investing for a return. You need to convince them that you are going to make money and deliver a healthy return. Show your assumptions. Make sure they are well researched and believable. A bottom up analysis will deliver a clear picture of your prospects and aid you in building your company. [When it comes to some of our goals, we will need investors so I will take suit to what is written.]

PRESS/TESTIMONIAL

What are others saying about you? Ask your customer to provide quotes on how well they like your product or service. If you don't have customers, ask experts to weigh in on your idea.

CUSTOMERS

List paying customers and those that are in the pipeline. Show that you have identified future prospects and explain how you are taking steps to win their business. [This is primarily done to help a visitor become a member.]

STATUS

How much capital do you need? How will you use it? This is where a well-detailed financial model will help you be clear in your goals. Don't forget to add a small amount for reserves. [The church budget was set.]

A Few Tips to Get People to Believe in Your Idea:

Connect. Research your audience and relate to their interests.

Use images. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Research. Know your industry inside and out.

Be likable. Smile. Make eye contact.

Practice, practice, practice.

You should know your story so well that you do not need to look at your slides. When raising capital, you never know when you will meet a prospective investor. So always, be ready.¹⁷

¹⁷ Lili Balfour, “11 Slides You Need to Sell Your Vision,” *HuffPost*, October 27, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lili-balfour/11-slides-you-need-to-sel_b_6051578.html (accessed February 10, 2018).

CHAPTER 3 THE BIBLICAL MODEL FOR CHURCH GROWTH

As a Spiritual leader, I had to go to my source to hear and see how to grow a church. My source is none other than the Bible, the Word of God. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. So, the question that I asked was, “What can we learn from the Book of Acts regarding church growth?”

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples were in the upper room, deciding who should replace Judas, who had hanged himself. The disciples were praying, agonizing, getting things right with each other and with God. After ten days of these things, the Bible says, Peter preached and 3000 souls were baptized into the church, and that day Scripture calls Pentecost. That was the beginning of the first century church.

Acts 2:42-47, I believe is a true biblical model of church growth:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

From the book of Acts, I extract these steps that I believe will lead to church growth:

- Unity
- Applied learning
- Fellowship and breaking bread
- Prayer

- Unselfishness
- Visitation
- Open doors

Each is explained more fully below:

Unity. Acts 2:1 and 44. I believe the first step to growing a church is Unity. Unity must first start within the leadership. The disciples, as previously mentioned, were unified in the upper room. They were of one accord and that one accord was purpose. When the leadership is of one accord, the members will follow. We see this in verse 44, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.” In order to not have any empty seats within my local church and in churches across the country, leadership must be in sync, unified, and of one accord. I like the words of the 17th century theologian John Owen:

There are many sore Divisions at this Day in the World, among and between the Professors of Christian Religion, both about the Doctrine and Worship of the Gospel, as also the Discipline thereof. That these divisions are evil in themselves, and the cause of great Evils, Hindrances of the Gospel, and all the Effects thereof in the Worlds, is acknowledged by all; and it is a thing doubtless to be greatly lamented, that the generality of them who are called Christians, are departed from the great rule of keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. He who doth pray always, who is not ready with his utmost Endeavour to remedy this Evil, to remove this great Obstruction of the Benefit of the Gospel, is scarce worth the Name of a Christian...

There is but one way of affecting this so blessed and desirable a Work (unity)... that all Churches endeavor to reduce themselves unto the Primitive Pattern. Let us all but consider what was the Life and Spirit of those Churches, wherein their Honor, Glory and Order did consist, making it our joint Design to walk in the Principle of that Grace of the Spirit wherein they walked, in the Exercise and Use of those Gifts of the Spirit which were the Spring of, and gave Virtue unto all their Administrations, renouncing whatever is Foreign unto, and inconsistent with these things, and that Grace and Unity will quickly enter into Professors, which Christ

hath purchased for them. But these things are here only occasionally mentioned; and are not farther to be pursued.¹⁸

Leadership must be unified in purpose. It will create cohesiveness and synergy that will infiltrate the church and make it catch on fire.

Applied Learning. There are three major elements embedded within verse Acts 2:42. The first is one I call Applied Learning. The Bible says “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.” The doctrine of the apostles was Christ. The doctrine that says Jesus came, lived, died, rose again, and is coming back to take us home. They kept encouraging and strengthening each other with that truth. Encouragement is important: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (I Thessalonians 5:11). Encouragement makes it so much easier to live in a fallen world. When the saints encourage each other, it makes it easier to love as Jesus loved.

Encouragement gives hope, encouragement helps us through times of discipline and testing, encouragement nurtures patience and kindness, and encouragement makes it easier to sacrifice our own desires for the advancement of God’s kingdom. In short, encouragement makes it easier to live the Christian life. Without encouragement, life at times may feel pointless and burdensome. Without encouragement, the very real pains of our lives can overwhelm us, we can feel unloved, and we may begin to think that God is a liar or is unconcerned with our welfare.¹⁹

So, the Bible tells us to encourage one another, to remind each other of the truth that God loves us that God equips us, that we are treasured, that our struggles are worth it.

Encouragement from the Bible gives us the will to carry on. It is a glimpse of the bigger picture. It can prevent burnout. It can save us from believing lies (“sin’s deceitfulness”). Encouragement helps us experience abundant life.

¹⁸ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, Thomas Russell, ed. (London: Richard Baynes, 1826), 308-9.

¹⁹ James Langston, *Words of Encouragement* (n.p.: June, 2016), 137.

Proverbs 16:24 says, “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” God’s Word is full of encouragement.²⁰

This is what I ask of my members, to call and encourage each other in the Lord.

Spend time reflecting on the pastor’s sermon and other Scriptures so that they may find strength in whatever you they are going through.

Fellowship and Breaking Bread. I truly believe The Lord created us to be social beings. There is power, accountability, and strength when we in the church, fellowship with one another. Sharing a meal with someone shows that you want to get to know him or her, be his or her friend. If it were up to me, we would have a fellowship meal at the church every single Sabbath. Right now, we consistently have it once a month and have one on a special day. We also have once-monthly Saturday night socials. The more the church comes together under the banner of Christ, the stronger and healthier it will be.

The German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer says,

Ever since Jesus Christ sat at table with his disciples, the table fellowship of his community has been blessed by his presence. “And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him” (Luke 24:30-31)

To know Jesus Christ in the presence of these gifts—what does this mean.

It means, first, to know him as the giver of all gifts, as the Lord and Creator of this our world, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The table fellowship therefore, prays, “And let Thy gifts to us be blest,” and thus acknowledges the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ.

Second, the fellowship acknowledges that all earthly gifts are given to it only for Christ’s sake, as this whole world is sustained only for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Word and his message. He is the true bread of life. He is not only the giver but also the gift itself, for whose sake all earthly gifts exist. Only because the message concerning Jesus Christ must still go

²⁰ Levin Uniting Church, “Living the Life,” <http://www.levinuniting.church/encouragement-study/> (accessed April 15, 2018).

forth and find believers, and because our task is not yet perfected, does God in His patience continue to sustain us with His good gifts. So the Christian table fellowship prays, in Luther's words: "O Lord God, heavenly Father, bless unto us these Thy gifts, which of Thy tender kindness Thou hast bestowed upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen," thus confessing that Jesus Christ is the divine Mediator and Savior.

Third, the congregation of Jesus believes that its Lord wills to be present when it prays for his presence. So it prays: "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest" – and thereby confessed the gracious omnipresence of Jesus Christ. Every mealtime fills Christians with gratitude for the living, presence Lord and God, Jesus Christ. Not that they seek any morbid spiritualization of material gifts; on the contrary, Christians, in their wholehearted joy in the good gifts of this physical life, acknowledge their Lord as the true giver of all good gifts; and beyond this, as the true Gift; the true Bread of life itself; and finally, as the One who is calling them to the banquet of the Kingdom of God. So in a singular way, the daily table fellowship binds the Christians to their Lord and one another. At table, they know their Lord as the one who breaks bread for them; the eyes of their faith are opened.

The fellowship of the table has a festive quality. It is a constantly recurring reminder in the midst of our everyday work of God is resting after His work, of the Sabbath as the meaning and goal of the week and its toil. Our life is not only travail and labor; it is also refreshment and joy in the goodness of God. We labor, but God nourished and sustains us. Moreover, this is reason for celebrating. Man should not eat the bread of sorrows (Ps. 127:2); rather "eat thy bread with joy" (Ecc. 9:7); "I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink and to be merry" (8:15). But, of course, "who can eat, or who can have enjoyment apart from Him?" (2:25, ARV.). It is said of the seventy elders of Israel who went up to Mount Sinai with Moses and Aaron that "they beheld God, and did eat and drink" (Exod. 24:11 A.R.V.). God cannot endure that unfestive, mirthless attitude of ours in which we eat our bread in sorrow, with pretentious, busy haste, or even with shame. Through our daily meals, He is calling us to rejoice, to keep holiday in the midst of our working day.

The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation. It is our daily bread that we eat, not my own. We share our bread. Thus, we are firmly bound to one another not only in the Spirit but also in our whole physical being. The one bread that is given to our fellowship links us together in a firm covenant. Now none dares go hungry as long as another has bread, and he who breaks this fellowship of the physical life breaks the fellowship of the Spirit. "Deal thy bread to the hungry" (Isa. 58:7) "Make not an hungry soul sorrowful" (Eccles. 4:2), for the Lord is meeting us in the hungry (Mt. 25:37). "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one

of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" (Jas. 2:15, 16). So long as we eat our bread together, we shall have sufficient even with the least. Not until one person desires to keep his own bread for himself does hunger ensue. This is a strange divine law. May not the story of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand with two fishes and five loaves have, along with many others, this meaning also?

The fellowship of the table teaches Christians that here they still eat the perishable bread of the earthly pilgrimage. But if they share this bread with one another, they shall also one day receive the imperishable bread together in the Father's house.²¹

The Bible says, "for where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Prayers. The New Testament Church not only encouraged each other in the Lord, fellowshiped, and ate together, but also and most importantly, they prayed together.

There is a saying that a family that prays together stays together. I am not sure how true that is, but there certainly is power when the body of Christ comes together and prays. I am an advocate of our Wednesday night Prayer service.

I believe strongly in prayer, prayer is the key to our Christian life. One pastor that I pattern my pastoring after is Jim Cymbala, the Pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church. I am going to take about two pages out of his book *Fresh Wind Fresh Fire* to define how much I believe in prayer.

From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens Tuesday nights will be the gauge of our success or failure. That will be the measure by which God blesses us. If we call upon the Lord, he has promised in His Word to answer, to bring the unsaved to himself, to pour out his Spirit among us. If we do not call upon the Lord, he has promised nothing, nothing at all. It is as simple as that. No matter

²¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Fellowship of the Table Life Together* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 66-69.

what I preach or what we claim to believe in our heads, the future will depend upon our times of prayer. This engine will drive the church. Yes, I want you to keep coming on Sundays, but Tuesday night is what it's really all about... You can tell how popular a church is by who comes on Sunday morning. You can tell how popular the pastor or evangelist is by who comes on Sunday night. But you can tell how popular Jesus is by who comes to the prayer meeting.²²

Unselfishness. The First Century Church was an unselfish church. The Bible says in verse Acts 2:45 that they sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. How amazing it would that be if the people of the church today would rally behind people in the church and help each other out financially. They sold what they had brought it to the storehouse and distributed evenly amongst the body of Christ. No one was left out; no one felt as if they had more or less than someone else. I believe this is critical to our church. The model is to be unselfish with the things that you have in order to be a blessing to someone else.

At San Bernardino Community, we have a community service program that exemplifies the early church example. Within our community service ministry, we provide food, clothes, showers, and assistance with bills and other things. I would like this service to become more robust so we can help more people in the church and outside of the church. The book review of *Selfless: Becoming Christ-Centered in a Self-Centered World* by Monica Freeman really puts Christian Selfishness into perspective: Elevate HIM and Decrease Me.

None of us thinks of ourselves as self-centered; we know for a fact that our friends, spouses, and neighbors are selfish. But not ME! This very thought is a clue that we are the one that needs to change the central focus of our lives-away from ME and onto HIM! In the process of becoming

²² Jim Cymbala and Dean Merrill, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Heart of His People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 27, 28.

Self less you will come face to face with the reality that we all are carriers of this trait. We are allowing this sin to infiltrate every area of our lives. We are the ones responsible for allowing our self to stifle our purpose and the joy of fulfilling His plan in our lives and in our culture. We have made this life and this world about us, not about HIM. Self-less is a call to action; it begins with you and me Self less will empower you to fulfill your calling Self less men and women will develop into Self less families Self less churches will finally have the growth that they are seeking Cultures change and nations change when we as individuals change. You will not be satisfied with your life as you know it. You will recognize the lies and the defeat of your previous perspective. You will never return to your self-centered self. YOU won't be there!²³

Visitation. Verse 46 of Acts 2 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” The disciples just did not minister in the temple but also in the homes of their members. When we read the life of Jesus we notice that his ministry was done primarily outside of the temple, whether it be on the Mount of Blessings, or by the graveside of Lazarus, or in the home of Simon. The ministry of Jesus was modeled by the first century church as it went to the homes of members, enjoyed a good meal, and spoke about the goodness of the Lord.

Once, I was in the Philippines holding a major evangelistic campaign. The brethren knew I was a good preacher but they did not think that I was a good pastor. They said that in the Philippines the pastor should have a big stomach. That is a sign that they visit their members. Because every house they go to would provide a meal for them. So, the more you visit, the more you eat, the bigger your stomach gets. I truly believe in visitation and getting into the homes of the people, even though I do not have a Filipino

²³ Amazon, review of *Selfless: Becoming Christ-Centered in a Self-Centered World*, by Monica Freeman, <https://www.amazon.com/Selfless-Becoming-Christ-Centered-Self-Centered-World/dp/1490972196> (accessed April 15, 2018).

pastor's stomach to prove this. When you are in their homes you can have more intimate conversation and in depth prayer. It builds the church and it builds the leadership. My first elder and I put together a visitation plan for the church, because the pastor cannot do it all. Each elder will visit and report back to me.

Chor-Kiat Sim, a chaplain at Washington Adventist Hospital, Takoma Park, Maryland gives six reasons for visitations:

Spiritual growth. Without a deep personal experience with God, pastors cannot make meaningful visits. Spiritual preparation before visiting is important. Without communion with God, visitations can become social events only. Mutual interactions between pastors and members evoke a desire to know each other better. Thus, it enhances both pastors and members with a better knowledge of God and themselves...

Relationships. Pastoral visits cement relationships between pastors and their members. Since relationships are vital in Christian ministry, these visits help parishioners know their pastors. Pastors also can encourage members to visit one another...the pastor's sincerity in making effective visits is certain to produce results...

Preaching. Pastoral visits give pastors insights into the lives of members, which enables the minister to preach with a particularly focused relevance...

Nurture. Pastoral visitation is an integral part of church ministry. Jesus' parting words to Peter urged him to feed His lambs (John 21:15–19). Coming close to people is essential in nurturing them. Each day their minds are bombarded with unwelcome ideas. Attaining nurture through shepherding is crucial, and it includes healing, sustaining, and guiding.

Stewardship. Pastoral visitation is key to communicating the relevance of stewardship...There is no better motivation to giving than for the pastor to provide a member with effective pastoral care through preaching and visitation.

Personal growth. Visiting others reveals inadequacies in the pastor's own life. One professor at the Adventist Theological Seminary confided, "Most seminarians are poor in comprehending the weaknesses and needs of their own inner being." Ministers need to rediscover themselves by asking,

“Who am I and what is a pastor?” This can be clarified for the pastor in his or her visitation of people...²⁴

To these six, I add a seventh reason for visitations: **Open doors**. The Church must stay open. In verse 46, it says, “So continue daily with one accord in the temple. It shows that the temple was open every day.” Whether it was for teaching, praying, or counseling the doors of the church were open. I truly believe that there are qualitative improvements when the church is always open. I believe that churches should be open seven days a week. Membership should know they can access the church during normal working hours and after-hours as well, maybe from 8:00 to 8:00, to be able to come and see the pastor, an elder or someone else just for prayer or conversation.

I dislike that Google says my church is open on Saturdays but closed Sunday-Friday. If I were doing a search on Google to find a church of my own, I would not come to my own church because, according to Google, it is only open on Saturdays for two hours. I am trying to change that! I am working on a plan to have the church open seven days a week. There would be a school, an after-school program, recreation in the gym, counseling sessions, a prayer room etc. I do not have hard data to prove what happens when a church is open every day. However, I do know from reading and experience that it changes the atmosphere of the church when things are going on.

I truly believe Acts 2:42-47 provides a model for how church ought to be. The last of verse summarizes everything, “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” I believe that when you

²⁴ Chor-Kiat Sim, “Why Pastoral Visitation?” *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, May, 1999, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1999/05/why-pastoral-visitation> (April 15, 2018).

follow the biblical model your church will grow spiritually and church numbers will grow.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRINITY OF MINISTRY

I have coined a phrase the “Trinity of Ministry” a model that contextualizes the Biblical Model of Church Growth for the 21st century and beyond. A vision to fill San Bernardino’s empty seats calls for a three-pronged approach of leadership to cast a vision, change the culture and grow the congregation spiritually, and evangelize the church and the community through the gospel of preaching and practice, making disciples of all who we come in contact with. Reach out to the community, and engage more directly with the community itself.

As the leader, my first task is to cast the vision, communicate it in a manner the church will buy into, and to create an environment in which the church is empowered to utilize its spiritual gifts to move the church forward.

Within my church, I teach about the trinity. God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God in three persons, different functions but one purpose.

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.” (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.)²⁵

²⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “God Trinity,” <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/trinity/> (accessed April 16, 2018).

So it is with ministry: A Trinitarian perspective of leadership, evangelism, and discipleship. I truly believe that this is a practical way to fill those empty seats in the church. In fact, the trinity of ministry parallels with the Triune God. God the Father is the leader, the visionary the one we pray to, the one who sent His son Jesus, John 3:16.

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.)²⁶

God the Son, Jesus Christ is the Evangelist. Jesus came to this earth to preach salvation and the kingdom of heaven.

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles, He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)²⁷

Lastly, The Holy Spirit is the One who leads us to a healthy Christian life. His power is how we become disciples. He is our comforter. He helps us to walk in newness of Life.

²⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "God Father," <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/father/go/-/footer/twitter/> (April 16, 2018).

²⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "God Son," <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/son/> (April 16, 2018).

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 61:1; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; 5:3; 10:38; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21.)²⁸

So, let us look at the practical application of the trinity of ministry.

Leadership is Discipleship: Build The Congregation Spiritually

People will only go as far as their leader. Leadership is patience, is using wisdom, it is organizing people to make a positive change. A Leader is one who creates an environment in which the gifts of the Spirit may flourish. He or she is effective in empowering others to realize their own calling or gifts and facilitates to listen and respond, has the capacity to take the initiative when appropriate, the ability to delegate responsibility to capable people, and the sensitivity to share resources. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." I was impressed by God that if I lead the people into a deeper spiritual relationship with the Lord, everything else would fall into place. So, I set about to be the type of leader capable of guiding the congregation into a deeper relationship with the Lord.

The first thing I did was preach week after week on discipleship. I preached sermons on faith, the Holy Spirit, prayer and fasting, deep study of the Word, asking people to recommit their lives to the Lord. Every Wednesday and Saturday, I sought to

²⁸ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "God Holy Spirit," <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/god/holy-spirit/go/-/footer/feedback/> (April 16, 2018).

preach sermons that were spirit-filled Christ-centered, and prophetically based. The aim was to revive the church, bring people in from the community, communicate awareness of social injustices, and issue a call to action for the kingdom of God, which was at hand.

Secondly, I encouraged and promoted more time for the church to be together. The number one time when the church will show up is Saturday Mornings at 11:00 am, our main weekly worship service. However, I promoted and pushed people to come to Sabbath School, our early morning Bible study classes, as well as our Wednesday Night Recharge. The Recharge is a weekly service geared toward prayer for the church and community. I encouraged small group Bible Studies for those who wanted to dig deeper into the Word and its application in daily living.

Thirdly, I spent more time doing visitation and in practicing the lost art of pastoring. One of the most common images or models of ministerial leadership in both Christian and Jewish traditions are that of the pastor as shepherd. It is a model of ministry that derives directly from God.

Psalms 23 says,

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
Forever.

In the pages of the New Testament, Jesus appropriated this image to describe his own method of ministry and leadership. One of the earliest and most enduring images in Christian art is of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The purpose of the visitation plan was to meet with the families of the church so that they knew I cared about their needs. Also, praying and visiting all those who are sick and in the hospital, reflected a form of pastoring that confirmed an intention shepherd.

Lastly, I have learned over the years of pastoring that there is no pulpit like your own pulpit. Your congregation wants to hear from its pastor. I cannot afford to travel and help build up other ministries if my ministry is not at the level it should be. God has assigned me to San Bernardino Community church and it is there where I will be faithful to the task given to me. When you build the people spiritually, the church will grow. There will be a revival in the church. Membership will start telling families and friends, co-workers and other members. People will see the change in their lives. Matthew 6:33 is the primary text for this context. Another scripture to exemplify my point is Matthew 7:25-27.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.

When the foundation is Jesus, no matter what adversities may hit, the church will always stand.

Leadership is Changing Culture

Changing the culture of any organization can be a difficult task. In a blog, Earl C.

Johnson, the Senior Pastor of Martin Street Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina,

gives advice on how to make changes in a church as a new pastor.

When Barack Obama ascended to the top of the nation's political mountain in 2008 by becoming the first African American and one of the youngest-ever presidents, he vowed loudly and clearly to bring something to America: Change.

One of his first acts as President was to bail out failing banks and secure the struggling auto industry by way of an economic stimulus package. He also spent most of his first year working to reform the healthcare industry, to ensure that all Americans would have some form of coverage. Change had come to America, but many people were not prepared for, or even excited about, the changes that were being instituted. Even some of the President's most ardent supporters spoke out vehemently against his policy changes, leaving his administration scrambling to reassure a fickle public that the changes were necessary for the economic vitality of the country.

I brought a similar message of change when I was called to pastor my first congregation in the mountains of Virginia.

The congregants repeatedly told me that they wanted "a change of pace" and that the previous pastor's inability to incorporate change had led to the church's stagnation. As a new and first-time pastor, I worked diligently to make changes in the church's ministries and its organizational structure. However, it did not take long for me to determine that my perception of change and that of the congregation was different. Within six months, many of my changes came under attack, and I found myself standing alone against a congregation rife with confrontation and confusion.

As I reflect on my first pastorate, I realize that I was a novice in congregational management. The people who resisted were not mean-spirited or intent on seeing me fail. They did not hold secret meetings to vote me out, nor were they a horde of backward-thinking people who knew nothing about congregational life. Many simply felt that the type of change I brought to the church was threatening their customs, beliefs, and traditions. Consequently, I have altered my position on bringing change to churches, and now believe that new pastors must explore the spiritual and the cultural dynamics of a congregation before pressing "the change button."

New pastors must understand that people typically strongly resist perceived threats to their traditions and values. The same church traditions that seem antiquated to some may be sacred to others. Many traditions may even date back to the post-slavery period when many black churches were established. What I learned and what I would like to share with others is that when you ask people to change what they are doing, you may be asking them to get rid of things they hold dear. More specifically, you are asking them to abandon years of practices and traditions that directly correlate to their identity as a congregation. 1

Too often new pastors take on congregations and bring with them preconceived notions not based in evidence. They want to make changes because they believe that taking over a new congregation requires making immediate changes. Many are anxious to test out on the new flock what they have studied and learned in seminary or Bible College. One of the first questions a new pastor (especially if he or she is young) should ask is, will this change create a healthier body of believers and worship environment or is the change being initiated just for the sake of changing something I believe is outdated?

Some new pastors are pressured by groups and individuals within the congregation who often demand that changes be made right away. However, every new pastor should realize that most changes in churches occur gradually, not immediately, even if there are members who are telling you to move swiftly. Additionally, congregations must trust a pastor as a leader before they will buy into where he or she is leading them. The people want to ascertain that where you are leading them is in their best interest. If they are unclear about your motives and/or where you are going, they will resist.

In the classic children's story *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks the Cheshire cat which direction she should take. "Well," says the cat, "that depends on where you want to go." Alice replies, "I really don't much care where." "Then," said the cat, "it really doesn't matter which way you walk." If a pastor is changing a program or policy or adding something new without considerable assessment as to why and where it will take the church, it can send mixed and confusing signals to a congregation.

I understand that there may be situations where a new pastor has no alternative but to act immediately. I have known pastors who made major serious changes in the core beliefs of a congregation before they were installed. I also know pastors who took over, cleaned house within two to three months, and survived the ordeal because it was expected, necessary, and wanted.

However, even if change is immediate, some rules still apply. John Maxwell writes in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* that making changes, whether in a congregation or a corporation, has more to do with timing than anything else. His “law of timing” illustrates that knowing when to lead is as important as what you do and where you go.¹ As a new pastor, 99% of the time, the time to make most major changes is not right after you get to a church.

I want to take the matter a step further and suggest to new pastors that timing is everything in the life of the congregation. Whatever changes you make have to be made with accurate timing, because every change has either a positive or a negative effect upon the congregation. Maxwell lists several reasons why timing is everything. First, he states, “The wrong action at the wrong time leads to disaster.” This concept has a biblical basis.

In Exodus 32, Moses, the leader, who brought the people out of Egypt to the foothills of Mt. Sinai, is summoned by God to meet God atop the mountain to receive further instructions on how and when to proceed with the people. Apparently, Moses’ journey of 40 days and 40 nights was long enough to cause the people to lose interest in God’s plans. They became anxious and began to discuss the possibility that Moses would not return. In their frustration and rebelliousness, they solicited Moses’ brother Aaron and convinced him to make a golden calf. Aaron was the priest who worked alongside Moses to pastor the people. Whether he was forced to build this golden calf or volunteered is a matter of debate. What is clear is that the people wanted change because they grew tired and weary of waiting for Moses, or because they concluded that their future was slipping away.

Whatever their rationale, they solicited the support of a man of God to help bring about the change they desired. Much can be gleaned from Aaron’s irresponsibility. As a co-leader of this wilderness church, Aaron made a bad decision. Not only was his timing off, but also creating another god for the people to worship was repugnant and against the will of God. It was the wrong decision at the wrong time and it led to disaster. Maxwell also suggests, “The right action at the wrong time brings resistance.” I made this mistake early in my pastorate by bringing in a new musician soon after the death of the church’s longtime organist. We had no organist, or a pianist, and we needed a musician. So I hired someone and agreed upon a higher salary than had ever been paid for an organist at this church. It was the right action, I surmised. However, within two months, the new musician was on his way out the door. It was the right action but introduced at the wrong time. In this scenario, I failed to enlist the sentiments of the people in this endeavor, and did it too quickly, although we all agreed it was necessary and vital to the life of the congregation.

Introducing change into your congregation is similar to a corporation introducing a new product. In the business world, all products have a life cycle, which begins with an introductory stage. During the introductory stage, the idea of the product is shared, discussed, and tested and feedback is received. In some cases, if the product does not meet quality control standards, or if the people who are to benefit from it reject it, the product will not leave the introductory stage. The point is that you can have the right motives, but if your plan for change is introduced to your people at the wrong time or in the wrong way, things will not bode well for your new idea.

A third point is this, “The wrong action at the right time is a mistake.” Aaron may have initiated what the people wanted at the time they wanted it, but what he did was clearly wrong. The timing might have been right for the rebels in the group, but making the golden calf was the wrong thing for Aaron to do. It is a mistake to give people what they want in order to win their approval. Aaron made a huge mistake and he paid for it dearly as God punished the people for their wickedness.

The following actions might help support and encourage new and especially young pastors as they work to incorporate changes into their congregations.

First, spend the first year studying and getting to know your congregation. Resist making any real changes until you have studied your congregation from top to bottom. The reason for this is two-fold. First, many pastors are voted into their positions. This means that a majority of those who voted wanted him or her as pastor. It also means that the minority may have had their hearts set on someone else or did not think much of your skills and qualifications. Very few pastors take over the management of a congregation with one-hundred-percent approval.

I once pastored a 400-member church that had a substantial opposition to my hiring. Instead of spending time trying to build a consensus with these non-supporters, I ignored them. Consequently, they resisted everything that I implemented. The lesson learned is that the opposition culture needs and deserves to be studied along with the entire congregation. Spending time getting to know your congregation is a worthwhile endeavor.

Second, develop a congregational survey that members can fill out and do not have to sign. Create one yourself or hire an outside consultant. Alternatively, you might find a doctoral student at a nearby school who is skilled in survey creation and assessment. Surveys assist in discovering the needs of your congregation. Many congregants will tell you things in a survey that they would not admit in a group setting or even to you personally. The survey is a part of blueprint that acts as your guide for making the necessary changes you want to make. If done correctly, it will

bring the congregation together and help shape a shared vision. Further, the weight of initiating change is taken off the shoulders of the pastor alone and there is a collective covenant that is shared by all. A survey can show church members that some things are “broken and need to be fixed.” It can also show a pastor that what he or she perceives as broken may not be. It is not likely that a pastor is the only one who can see that something is broken.

Third, new pastors should meet with every leader in the congregation. Associate ministers and members of various boards, including deacons, trustees, ushers, youth leaders, and financial overseers should be included in one-on-one discussions. You might also meet with secretaries, building and church office staff, and anyone else who holds a position of authority. This will aid you in understanding what each does, how they perceive their roles, their concerns, and their walk with Christ. It will enhance commitment from them to support your leadership as a pastor. If they are in opposition to your work, you need to know upfront and may have time to clear up misunderstandings and build consensus.

Fourth, review your congregation’s constitution and by-laws. You might want to speak with an attorney regarding “red flag” issues that are directly related to you as the pastor or the future fiscal health of the church. Unfortunately, during the interview process, churches are reluctant to allow pastoral candidates to review their by-laws and financial records. As a result, too many pastors take on a pastoral position rather blindly. The church could be broke, broken down, or both and you will not know it. Also, as pastors propose changes, members may remind you about policies and procedures outlined in their constitution and by-laws, so it is important to have a clear understanding of these documents. I would suggest that, if possible, you read the constitution and by-laws before accepting the church. Examining these documents as soon as possible will make you aware of some basic facts and perhaps explain why certain rules and rituals were developed.

Fifth, new pastors must remember that congregations are unique and autonomous. As the pastor, you might consider yourself a servant of the Most High God, but you have to earn the respect, love, and trust of the people. Chances are, your congregation has been around a long time and will probably be there long after you are gone, if you do not destroy it. The people will resist you taking away their religious practices unless you show them a genuine reason to abandon them. Moreover, you will not know what to ask them to give up if you insist on acting as if no one is right but you. Also, why should people support you if they do not respect and trust you?

Finally, love and improve the leadership. A main problem affecting the growth and development of many congregations is inadequate leadership.

Spend time training the men and women in leadership positions before you incorporate any major changes. Most importantly, encourage them to take leadership classes inside and outside of the church and promote small group participation. The goal is to create an atmosphere of leadership excellence where change can take place with the support of the church's leaders. Too few new pastors are good at and/or take the time to do leadership training. The failure to do so will come back to haunt you in some way at some point. If training is not your forte, call in an expert.

Being a new pastor can be immensely fulfilling. Knowing when and how to make congregational changes will be vital to your success.²⁹

After this reading, I began to make changes, to improve the perception of the church. As people say, "Perception is Reality."

In the setting of a church, having a notion of what it means to be a prophetic agent can be instrumental in generating a change culture. A prophetic agent is one who speaks the truth in love to the church and the community and one who speaks truth to power. Prophecy in the Bible is more than ecstatic speech uttered in the power of the Spirit, and not merely about seeing the future. A prophet is one who does not "foretell" so much as "forth-tell" the truth. As a prophet, a minister speaks the truth in love, communicates an awareness of social injustices, and sensitizes others to spiritual and ethical implications of various structures and practices in the church, religious community, and in the wider society.

When people have been doing something a certain way for a long time, it takes a lot of energy to switch away from them, even if there were not many positive results attributable to those old ways. Two strategies that were needed and used to change the culture were vision casting and training.

²⁹ Earl C. Johnson "Making Changes in Churches-Exodus 32: A Word for New Pastors," <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/dialogue/makingChangesinChurches.pdf> (April 16, 2018).

Casting the Vision

The Bible says that without a vision the people perish. Each pastor must hear from God and set the vision and mission for the church. The pastor has to allow time for people to buy into the vision. So, my recommendation is preach, teach, and exemplify the vision and mission even before you share it with the church. Write everything out that God has shown you, preach sermons and have lessons and ministry that showcase the vision that God has placed in your heart. The people will begin to buy in without knowing that the vision God has been placed on their heart for the church. Wait for about a year, and then share the vision and mission in a written form with the church. Within that year, you have time to confirm what God has told you.

Continue to have one-on-one conversation with the Lord, to see if there was anything you missed or you need to add or tweak. The vision should be shared with one to three close people who can also help you in that first year. After the vision has been set, it must be executed. Executing the plan God has set is critical. Leadership must stay focused! We are in a spiritual battle, so the vision God has placed on you will not be executed without opposition. But if God be for you, who can be against you?

One of my favorite stories is when Moses was at the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army was behind him. God placed a vision in the heart of Moses to free his people from the bondage of pharaoh and the Egyptians. Well, the time had come and they were emancipated not by conciliation with pharaoh but by God's might. They have now come to a dead end at the Red Sea. The people began to complain to Moses, saying that they should have stayed in Egypt. Even though they were being mistreated they would have preferred to live in bondage rather than take a chance with Jehovah. They lacked faith, but Moses did not. He cried to the Lord. God told him that He would deliver him. Moses

then stretched out his rod and the sea opened up. As leaders, we will always face opposition but we must be confident in the vision God places inside of us, even when it appears that we are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Pharaoh's army is behind you and the red sea is in front of you. We as leaders must stretch in faith, symbolizing that we believe that God will extend the vision. It's not going to die. God will keep it alive, as long as we remember our mission and culture. The book, *Culture Shift: Transforming your Church from the Inside Out* states:

Culture is the most important social reality in your church. Though invisible to the untrained eye, its power is undeniable. Culture gives color and flavor to everything your church is and does. Like a powerful current running through your church, it can move you inland or take you farther out to sea. It can prevent your church's potential from ever being realized, or—if used by the Holy Spirit—it can draw others in and reproduce healthy spiritual life all along the way.³⁰

In order to communicate the culture and vision of the church, we created a booklet containing the Mission Statement, Mission Text, Motto, Core Values, Vision Statement, and Logo to help congregants deal with the change in culture (See Appendix B).

After capturing the vision and mission as shown in the brochure, the next step in changing the culture was training. Training is essential to culture change. Within my local church, we have a policy to establish a nominating committee that will vote in new officers or keep the officers that are currently in place. The nominating committee completed its task and now it's time for training. Two training sessions were scheduled for the month of January. The community has great needs, and although I will do some of

³⁰ Robert Lewis, Wayne Cordeiro and Warren Bird, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 3.

the training, I am blessed to have a number of colleagues that can help train my congregants.

By changing the culture for the better, the morale of the church will increase. When the morale of the church is increased then work is done more effectively and efficiently. With proper training, the membership is all on the same page and then synergy exists. With the increased morale and synergy, the work of the church will become contagious. Henry and Richard Blackaby capture well the sentiment and context for change at San Bernardino SDA Church:

Historically, God has repeatedly chosen young people and fashioned them into great leaders. The key for each of them, as it would be for Joshua was their willingness to be patient and obedient as God prepared them for His purposes. At times emerging leaders limit their future possibilities by their impatience. They look for shortcuts to success, but God is methodical. He typically lays a foundation of character before building a superstructure of leadership. God is not as interested in our origins as He is in our obedience.³¹

Leadership is Evangelism

Part of the change was required of me, to have the attitude that I was not just the pastor for my church but also the pastor for an entire community. For example, if a community member needed funeral services, the church could be available to them and I could officiate. When community members faced social justice issues or educational issues, my church could be there to offer them guidance. The church is strategically located right beside Loma Linda University. As a result, many area medical students are able to fulfill their community service obligations hours and do ministry with San Bernardino SDA if they so choose.

³¹ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Called to Be God's Leader: How God Prepares His Servants for Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 7, 9.

For example, a Medical student once came to visit and asked me if he and a group of fellow students might begin to help the church better connect with the community. The answer from the pastor and the board was yes! That began a ministry called Impact San Bernardino, a student lead ministry that goes door to door in our community to connect the community with the church. Every first Sabbath of the month after church the students will go into the community to hand out books and any flyers that we might have, and ask community members about their needs. As needs are discovered, they are reported back to the church and the church will find people to provide assistance. On every first Sabbath, we have a social for the church and the community.

Another aspect of Impact San Bernardino is the Wednesday Night service. Every Wednesday the students faithfully come and pick up kids in the community and give them snacks, play games with them, and teach them about the love of Christ. This service has grown. In the first three months, practically no one attended. Three girls started to come and we now have about ten kids showing up each Wednesday. The age group is between 5 and 10. As the students engage with the children, they help us bridge the gap with their parents as well. Before long, a whole family may be attending our Sabbath morning services.

Finally, the last aspect of the ministry is focused on the homeless. Every third Sabbath morning we have free showers for the homeless. Some walk in, others are picked up at a central location and brought to the church early on Saturday morning. They receive a hot shower, clean clothes, and breakfast. Those able to stay for worship service receive lunch when the church service is over. Impact San Bernardino has been a true

blessing to our church. We have not only engaged the community but have also engaged with young adults in service to Christ, the church, and the community.

Another way we have evangelized the community is through personal evangelism and with Bible workers. Dr. Gloria Bell in her book *Help for the Harvest* lays out a detailed job description of a Bible Worker. Such a worker is one who will:

Study the Word of God with individuals, families, and groups leading them from where they are to a full surrender of their lives to Christ.

Assist the pastor/evangelist and personal ministries leader with the development of plans and procedures for a major evangelistic program...

Develop interest in volunteer Bible instruction through rallies, presentations and appeals, special events, personal invitations etc.

Support the pastor/evangelist in assisting, or conduction regular review meetings with the Bible instructor team for the purpose of devotion and prayer emphasis, in which you distribute Bible-student interest assignments, hear and give input on reports of the Bible instructors about their progress with study interests, provide ongoing training and presentations, secure special speakers for Bible instructor enrichment, resolve issues and concerns, develop strategic planning, make announcements, give directives, and provide relationship-building activities...

Be available to assist Bible instructors in gaining decisions for baptism.

Be an ever-growing student of the Word of God in knowledge and personal life application, in presentation and in teaching/training others.

Represent themselves as professionals of the highest calling and standards, and model a Christ-Centered character at all times. The head coordinator should display an obvious love for God and those for whom He gave His life...³²

The job of a Bible worker is to give Bible studies to those in the church requesting Bible Studies. It is to train people in the church on how to give a Bible Study and lastly to go into the community and find new Bible studies. The Church has hired a full time Bible worker who is also an experienced pastor. He is constantly and consistently bringing new

³² Gloria J. Bell, *Help for the Harvest* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 35-36.

people to the church. He is training a group of people who want to learn how to give a Bible Study. We have already baptized about 20 new people because of his efforts.

Personal ministries have not really taken off as of yet. However, in this New Year with our new personal ministries leader I believe it will. Personal ministries will really impact the church, because people will be building spiritual relationships with those they already have some relationship with. These people work with each other, or are neighbors, friends or family. With our new leader, they will be taught how to engage those in their sphere of influence on spiritual matters in a way that is not intrusive.

Evangelism- Matthew 28:19, 20, Jesus says, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded and Lo I am with you always even until the end of the age.” Jesus commands us to share the Gospel to all the world. This is evangelizing, sharing to a dying a world that Jesus is the solution to every problem and soon He will place His government here on this earth. Ellen White says, “Evangelistic work, opening the scriptures to others, warning men and women of what is coming upon the world, is to occupy more and still more of the time of God’s servants.”³³

There is a widely held view that evangelism doesn’t work anymore, but that is largely result of misunderstanding about modern public evangelism. If we hold onto old or corporate methods of evangelizing,

Hiring of an evangelist to come to our church for a month, send out thousands of handbills, rent a hall or pitch a tent to accommodate the large crowds, and then baptize many of them, then yes, public evangelism doesn’t work anymore. At least not like it used to. If, however, we

³³ Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 17.

consider Christ's prescribed method for winning souls and follow His example, then we can expect public evangelism to be very effective.³⁴

Ellen White describes this method as a relational one, were Christ “mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, Follow Me.”³⁵

A revival is geared more to the church while an evangelistic campaign is more geared to the community. I have done evangelistic campaigns in different parts of the world and the country, and they were all specific to the community where they were held. Jesus says, “If I be lifted up I would draw all men unto me” (John 3:22). When we rage war against the enemy, God is right here in our community. Jesus did it, the early church did it; we also need to do it. Baptize people and win souls for Jesus where you are and this will bring people into the church and fill up those empty seats.

Evangelism is Discipleship and Discipleship is Evangelism

Discipleship is another vital component of evangelism. As much as I like to baptize families, I love to see them stay active in the church so that they can receive spiritual nurturing. Baptism is not the end all, but a beginning step into a new life with Jesus Christ. After you set the vision, after you bring new people, everyone must be discipled. Discipleship is a lifetime process; it is daily growing with God. Under the curriculum of discipleship, the pastor is intentionally giving his/her members tools for how to have a love relationship with Jesus. When one is taught and has a love relationship with Jesus, they will catch fire and begin to share the gospel with people all

³⁴ John Bradshaw, *Successful Public Evangelism* (Chattanooga, TN: It Is Written, 2017), 4.

³⁵ Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), 143.

around. They will produce disciples. As a result, you have a healthy church. There is a process for church growth and it does not happen overnight. I know we read in Acts that 3000 people were added, but remember the process started three and a half years before with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Peter is tagged as the one that won 3000 souls, but Jesus planted, Peter watered, and God gave the increase. The key to no more empty seats is discipleship. Leadership and evangelism can fill your pews, but discipleship can fill your people.

The Discipleship program that we use at the church is entitled Evangel-Live, a discipleship program primarily created for newly baptized members of the SDA Church. However, it can be tailored to re-Baptisms, professions of faith, transfers, current members, and non- SDA Churches. Among the activities and teachings of Evangel-Live are the following:

For Baptized/Re-Baptized Members of the SDA Church:

How to live for Jesus

1. After baptism, the newly baptized member receives his or her Baptismal Certificate.
2. The newly baptized member enrolls in the 13 week Discipleship Class where they will
 - a. Learn about:
 - i. the 28 fundamental belief of the SDA Church and receive the book;
 - ii. the infrastructure of the SDA Church;
 - iii. their Local Church.
 - b. Sign up for service.
 - c. Meet your Mentor Day

- d. After completion of the course, they will receive a certificate of participation in the Evangel-Live Discipleship Course.
- 3. The Last Part of the Evangel-Live Discipleship Program involves the Mentorship Component. No more than two-weeks after baptism the newly baptized member will meet with their mentor. The mentor's job description is:
 - a. One-Year commitment
 - b. Must connect with the mentee once a week
 - i. The Mentor will field any issues that the Mentee may have such as: financial, marital, health. If the mentee cannot handle the issue then the mentee must contact mentor coordinator for assistance.

For those making a Profession of Faith:

- 1. The newly baptized member enrolls in the 13 week Discipleship Class where they will
 - a. Learn:
 - i. How to live for Jesus
 - ii. About the 28 fundamental belief of the SDA Church and receive the book.
 - iii. The infrastructure of the SDA Church
 - iv. About their Local Church
 - b. Sign up for service.
 - c. Meet their Mentor Day
 - d. After completion of the course they will receive a certificate of participation in the Evangel-Live Discipleship Course.

For Transfers:

- 1. Three-Hour Orientation on the Local Church.

For Current Members:

- 1. One-Week Sermon Series on a God-Filled Church
- 2. Three-Hour Seminar on No More Empty Seats

For Those from Non SDA Churches:

After baptism, the newly baptized member receives their Baptismal Certificate.

2. The newly baptized member enrolls in the 13 week Discipleship Class where they will
 - a. Learn:
 - i. How to live for Jesus
 - ii. About the 28 fundamental belief of the SDA Church and receive the book.
 - iii. The infrastructure of the SDA Church
 - iv. About their Local Church
 - a. After completion of the course they will receive a certificate of the Evangel-Live Discipleship Course.
1. The last part of the Evangel-Live Discipleship Program is the Mentorship Component. No more than two-weeks after baptism the newly baptized member will meet with their mentor. The mentor's job description is:
 - a. A one year commitment
 - b. Must connect with the mentee once a week.
 - i. The mentor will field any issues that their mentee may have such as: financial, marital, health. If the mentee cannot handle the issue then the mentee must contact mentor coordinator for assistance.

Discipleship fills the people with the Holy Spirit. Here is what Jim Morgan says in his article, "Why Discipleship is the Ultimate Church Growth Model:"

Pressing forward in the face of the risk that your attendance will shrink if members are challenged to BE the church between Sundays and relentlessly pursue the real "customer" (the lost in the community) is not optional – it's Biblical. Pastors should have the faith to follow the Lord's leading, whatever the outcome.

While there's risk, there's also tremendous upside. The congregants who do stick around will be those who are:

- hungry for truth
- eager to grow deeper in their relationship with the Lord
- possibly poor in material wealth but are rich in faith

- disciples, or willing to become one
- ready to make an impact within their circles of influence
- committed to growing the Kingdom
- all in!”³⁶

³⁶ Jim Morgan, “Why Discipleship Is the Ultimate Church Growth Model,” meettheneed.org, February 22, 2017, <http://meettheneed.org/blog/2017/02/why-discipleship-is-the-ultimate-church-growth-model/#sthash.T7rg5QPD.dpbs> (accessed April 17, 2018).

CHAPTER 5 FILLING OUR FUTURE

This chapter describes what we did in 2017 and what we planned for every month of 2018 to fill the seats of my church with “all in” people.

January

I believe in the power of prayer! When God’s people pray things happen. So, in the second week of the year, we held a weeklong prayer revival. Each night, the elders preach a sermon on prayer. Then after each sermon, I lead the church into a prayer specifically for the things that we wanted to see happen in the church. Each night was anointed. The prayer revival put the church on the right track for the 2017 year.

February

As mentioned earlier, our church is surrounded by four schools at a distance of less than one mile from the church. Therefore, we decided to do something for the children. In February, we presented a puppet show for the kids. The name of the show was “Fruit Troop,” and we learned about it from a church in Tucson, Arizona. The Tucson church travels throughout the United States putting on a Christian Puppet Show for kids. Although the show is geared to children, parents (including me) loved it just as much. Great advertising was done for the show throughout the city and to other SDA churches. I had a team of people passing out flyers at the school. It was great! On that Friday evening, the church was jammed packed. At least 300 people filled our church: kids and parents, churchgoers and non-church-goers alike. The show was awesome, and

everyone enjoyed it! At the end of the show, we were able to connect with a family who lives in the neighborhood whose son who attends one of the local schools. This was the first big event that we hosted for the church that included my local community and the broader SDA Community. Everyone called that Friday night a success.

March

March is springtime, and from a church setting, I always think about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I normally do a revival, but in 2017, I concentrated on Resurrection Sabbath. Since SDA churches hold worship services on Saturday, we normally celebrate the resurrection on that day instead of Sunday. So, resurrection Sabbath was an anointed one. Although the elements of worship were pretty much the same, two major differences were the music and the attire of the pastor.

I asked a good friend who directs a big choir in the city of San Bernardino to come and give us three selections. The church has never had a choir like that come to the church. I did not tell my friend anything about the church in terms of style of music, audience, culture, etc. I just told him to move as the Spirit moved him, and that is exactly what he did. The first song that he sang had a Caribbean sound. As mentioned before there are many Caribbean people in my church, and they just loved the music! They embraced him and the choir from that point forward.

When I preach, I usually wear a dark colored suit or a robe. However, on resurrection Sabbath, I wear an all-white suit. On the Sabbath leading up to resurrection Sabbath, I told the church to dress in all white, but no one really listened to me. Nevertheless, when they saw their pastor in all white they were truly impressed. Now, I am not saying that looks grow a church or that looks bring an anointing. However, I think when there is uniformity and order that is led by the pastor it sends a message to the

congregation. In the sanctuary in scripture, God was very specific about what the High Priest would wear. In addition, each color and emblem on the robe of the High Priest had meaning. The meaning of white on resurrection Sabbath is victory; it is purity. God sent His son Jesus to die for our sins. He did that on Friday, on the Sabbath he rested, and on Sunday, he arose. We let the world know that if you believe in Him, His blood will wash us white as snow. Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come let us reason together, though your sins maybe red like crimson I will make them as white as snow.”

May

In the month of May, we had two special events. Like all churches, we celebrate the mothers of our church. I believe even though all churches do it, it is a special time. If there are people who do not normally come to church, there are certain days they will show up and Mother’s Day is one of them. Therefore, my elders took the lead on Mother’s Day Sabbath and made the mothers and women of the church feel very special. They gave them gifts, acknowledged the oldest and youngest mothers in the church, and ended the day with a nice meal for the women all done by the men.

Another special day we had in May was education day. Education day was the day we recognized all graduates in our church. It was a big morale booster for everyone. We wanted to show the graduates that the church loved them and that we were proud of them. There were about 25 graduates from kindergarten all the way to medical professionals. The celebration showed the church and the community that we valued education. As much as we want individuals to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we also want people to have an education so they can get well-paid jobs to provide for themselves and their families and help the body of Christ by being model citizens in the community. We had a phenomenal speaker in a young woman who just completed her

Master's Degree and was getting ready to go into a doctoral program. She is an international speaker and really inspired the church.

June

June was the busiest and biggest month of the year. June 10-July 05, were the biggest four weeks of our church. On June 10, we were the host church to one of the four block parties that we have in San Bernardino. In 2015, there was a mass shooting at a regional center in San Bernardino. Because of that and all of the crime going on in the city, the chief of police wanted to meet with all the pastors in the summer of 2016. I went to the meeting and from that meeting we formed San Bernardino Pastors United (SBPU). SBPU is a non-denominational organization of pastors in the city of San Bernardino who want to make a difference in their city. One of the components of the San Bernardino Pastors United is to help bring peace back to the city. Therefore, we started to do block parties in the different parts of the city. On June 10, we utilized the baseball field at San Bernardino High School, which is directly across the street from my church. About 2,500 people came to this event. We gave out free food, there were several different vendors, and we set up a stage for our musicians. The musicians played, the praise team sang, and I gave the message. Many people gave their lives over to Jesus that day; many came down for the altar call to receive special prayer. It was truly an anointed day.

That night, June 10 at 7:00pm, we started our three- week public evangelistic campaign. For the last six weeks, Bible workers were in the field knocking on doors, meeting people, conducting Bible studies with them, and passing out flyers. The theme for the campaign was "Breakthroughs." We had a meeting each night except for Mondays and Tuesdays. On Saturdays, we had two meetings: one in the morning and one in the evening. There was spirit-filled music each night, a powerful word, anointing service, gift

giveaways, and much more. At the end of the meeting, the Lord provided for us a harvest of 30 new people into the church. God really, really blessed us!

July

The next day after our public meeting, we had another revival for the Inland Empire that includes Riverside County and San Bernardino County. Dr. Carlton P. Byrd, who is the Speaker Director of Breath of Life Television Ministries, and one of the best-known speakers of the SDA Church, was scheduled to speak for all of the SDA Churches in the Inland Empire, Orange County, and San Diego County that Friday and Sabbath. I asked him to come early for the Early Byrd Special. And special it was! Dr. Byrd preached three amazing sermons. The different music that accompanied the sermon was truly anointed. The church was packed to capacity each night and after each service, there was a time for fellowship in our outreach center. The community and the church are still asking when he will come back.

The Block party, Breakthroughs, and The Early Byrd special garnered much positive attention to our church. As a result, more people are starting to know and love San Bernardino Community SDA.

November

In the month of November, we had three major events. On International Day, over 30 countries were represented—from the Philippines, to Mexico, to Africa, to the Caribbean, and of course the U.S. and many other regions of the world. Church members dressed in the attire of their country of origin and together we celebrated Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's creative power. We wanted to showcase unity through diversity: out of many, one nation. The sermon and music were good, but on this particular Sabbath, everyone was anticipating the food. And it was worth the wait. On many international

days, each country representative brings food representing his or her country, but this year we focused on the Caribbean region. Foods included rice 'n' peas, roti, ginger beer (non-alcoholic) and many more. People are still talking about the food that was served on that day.

The second event was the AMEN Clinic. AMEN stands for Adventist Medical Evangelism Network. This is one of the medical components of the Seventh-day Adventists, who go all around the world working with churches and providing free health, dental, and vision care. Descriptions of the event was written and published in local newspapers and magazines (See Appendix D).

The third event was our annual Thanksgiving feeding. Over 200 people enjoyed a turkey dinner provided by our community services department. A local football team came to volunteer along with other volunteers from our church. The food was excellent and we gave out clothes and turkeys. This is an event the community looks forward to every year.

December

December was a jam-packed month. On the first Sabbath of the month, 100 high schoolers from Loma Linda Academy sang Christmas songs. They were excellent. On the third Sabbath, a group from Arizona gave another Christmas concert. The church really embraced them. On the same Sunday, we held our annual Toy Drive to the community. We gave out about 100 gifts to the kids and some adults as well. Prior to the gift give-away, we had good food with great entertainment.

We ended the year at one of our sister churches. Since 2016, I had been working to get all the SDA Churches in San Bernardino to worship together the last Sabbath of the

year. It has become an annual joint communion service held at 4pm in the afternoon to close of every year.

God is good, for in 2018 we have even bigger goals that I know the Lord will help us to achieve.

CHAPTER 6: MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES AND EVALUATIONS

There are many different competencies that one needs to fulfill this vision of *No More Empty Seats*. I believe I have many core competencies but I will talk about the top three ministerial competencies that my site team and I determined are applicable and present in this ministry: leadership, prophetic agency, and pastoring.

Leadership. Throughout the entire project of this dissertation, the issue of leadership emerges as critical to any hope for success. People only go as far as their leader. Leadership requires patience, wisdom, and organizing people to seek positive change. A leader is the one who creates an environment in which the gifts of the Spirit can flourish. He or she is effective in empowering others to realize their calling and gifts. The leader facilitates, listens and responds. The leader displays a capacity to take the initiative as appropriate, has the ability to delegate responsibility to capable people, and displays sensitivity and shares resources. As a leader, I am the one who:

- Has a willingness to learn from others;
- Can communicate an overall sense of direction and enable others to accomplish it;
- Has a consistent ability to follow through on plans;
- Has a willingness and ability to take initiative when appropriate;
- Has a willingness and ability to delegate responsibility to capable people;
- Has respect for the talents and abilities of others, and ability to facilitate their exercise effectively;

- Has the ability to motivate others to achieve their best efforts;
- Has the ability to provide support and to do follow-up on the initiatives of others;
- Has the willingness to show appreciation to others for a job well done;
- Has the ability and willingness to share knowledge and resources;
- Has the ability to provide constructive criticism effectively.

As the leader, there are three primary strategies that I like to use.

Strategy 1: Cast the vision. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people perish...”

Strategy 2: Communicate the vision in a manner that permits the church to buy into it as its own.

Strategy 3: Create an environment where the church is empowered to utilize its spiritual gifts, thereby moving the church forward.

At the end of each year, I evaluate myself by:

1. Determining whether or not the vision is coming to fruition;
2. Assessing whether or not the church has achieved particular goals;
3. Weighing what the church completed during the prior year in the following areas:

Evangelism

- Yearly Public Meetings
- Training for Soul-Winning
- Weekly Baptisms
- Media Publications
- Television Broadcast
- Radio Broadcast
- Quarterly Trac Attacks

Discipleship

- Weekly Prayer Sessions and Bible Studies

- Corporate Fasts and Spiritual Retreats
- Visitations
- Mentoring and Guardianship
- Seasonal Revivals

Outreach

- Day Center
- After School Program
- Community Services
- Prison Ministries
- Local and International Mission Projects
- Health Seminars
- Partnering with other entities for community improvement

Worship

- Bible Based Powerful Preaching
- Spirit Filled Magnetic Music
- Life Changing Prayer
- Heartfelt Testimonies

Leadership Development

- Leadership Training
- Motivating Ministries for Children and Youth
- Continuing Education

Marketing

- Billboards
- Fliers
- Invitation Cards
- Social Media
- Newspaper Ads

Prophetic Agency. A prophetic agent is one who speaks the truth in love to the church and the community. A prophetic agent is also one who speaks truth to power.

Prophecy in the Bible is more than a matter of ecstatic speech uttered through the power of the Spirit, and much more than merely foretelling the future. A prophet is one who does not “foretell” so much as “forth-tell” the truth. As a prophet, a minister speaks the truth in love, communicates an awareness of social injustices, and sensitizes others to spiritual and ethical implications of various structures and practices in the church/synagogue/mosque/religious community, and in society. As a Prophetic Agent, I must be:

- Committed to the transformation of the world.
- Sensitive to and empathic toward victims of social injustice.
- Skilled in analyzing social structures and able to diagnose the roots of social problems.
- Able to translate intuition into specific change strategies.
- Discerning of the ethical implications of strategies for change.
- Willing to embrace risk in order to create social change.
- Able to communicate passion for justice and inspiration for change to others. .
- Able to involve others in the process of seeking social change, creating group ownership, and building coalitions.
- Aware of cultural location and biases, and of the global implications of commitments and/or actions.

Below are some strategies that I apply in my church in fulfilling the role of prophetic agent.

Strategy 1: Every Wednesday and Saturday, preach sermons that are spirit-filled Christ-centered and prophetically based. In addition, hold special services where

members of my church and the community can meet with city officials and express their concerns for change.

Strategy 2: Hold a one-, two-, or three-week revival that will revive the church and bring people in from community. The messages preached will communicate awareness of social injustices and call for action in the kingdom of God that is at hand.

Strategy 3: Hold small group Bible studies for those who want to dig deeper into the Word and its application to where we are in earth's history today.

I appreciated what Marvin A. McWickle, President of Colgate Rochester Crozer

Divinity School says:³⁷

One of the essential needs in every congregation of believers is an occasional sermon rooted in the words and witness of the Old Testament prophets. Preachers need to play a role within the life of their congregation and their community similar to the role that such people as Amos, Jeremiah, and Micah played within the life of the nations of Israel and Judah. James Ward and Christine Ward begin their important book on this subject of prophetic preaching by writing:

The natural inclination of the Christian community, like all religious communities, is to adapt its witness of faith to its most immediate human needs. In doing this the community always runs the risk of obscuring the wider dimensions of the gospel, particularly the wider implications of God's demand for righteousness and justice. What is needed, therefore, is preaching that recovers these wider dimensions and illuminates the ways in which the community obscures them. (1995, 11)

What is prophetic preaching?

Prophetic preaching shifts the focus of a congregation from what is happening to them as a local church to what is happening to us as a society. Prophetic preaching then asks the question, "What is the role or the appropriate response of our congregation, our association and our denomination to the events that are occurring within our society and throughout the world?" Prophetic preaching points out those false gods of comfort and of a lack of concern and acquiescence in the face of evil that

³⁷ Marvin A. McWickle, "Where Have all the Prophets Gone?" *Ashland Theological Journal* 37 (2005): 7-18.

can so easily replace the true God of scripture who calls true believers to the active pursuit of justice and righteousness for every member of the society.

The prophets preached truth to power, attacking the monarchs and the ruling elite for putting more confidence in armies and alliances than they did in the God who had brought them into that land. The prophets challenged the people of Israel who believed that God would never abandon them no matter how far the nation strayed from the covenant it had established with God back at Sinai. With an urgency that could not be contained and a fervor that could not be controlled, the prophets declared their “Thus says the Lord” despite the ridicule, rebuke and outright rejection that most of them experienced throughout their lives. It is impossible to imagine the biblical narrative being told without the pronouncements of the prophets.

Why is prophetic preaching important today?

It is easy to see the need for prophetic preaching in our churches and throughout our society. Many Christians worship inside of immaculately maintained churches that are situated in neighborhoods that look like bombed out war zones. Many Christians drive to church from the suburbs to churches located within a community that has been ravaged by poverty, drug trafficking, the loss of industry through outsourcing and factory closings and underfunded and overwhelmed public school systems. Of course, many Christians never have to see these sights or confront the people and problems in these inner city communities, because they have moved out of the city to pristine outer ring suburbs and have brought their churches out to those upscale areas with them.

For those who continue to travel into the crumbling and decaying cities of our nation it is crucial that they hear a prophetic word about the problems that surround their church, the social policies that are the root cause of those problems and what they can do as an expression of their biblical faith to bring about change. For those who live and worship in exurbia and who never get close enough to the grimy side of America for anything to rub off on them, prophetic preaching becomes even more urgent. It is crucial that people with wealth, power and influence be challenged by a prophetic word that calls upon them to direct their resources not simply for tax advantages for themselves, but for a fairer and more just society for their fellow citizens.

What are the issues and themes of prophetic preaching?

The prophets remind Israel, just as we need to be reminded through regular doses of prophetic preaching, that God is the sovereign creator and sustainer of the whole creation. The God who sent Jonah to preach

salvation in Nineveh is the same God who used Babylon and Persia as the instruments of God's will. The God who formed Israel into a great nation when they were delivered from bondage in Egypt is the same God who can send Israel back into captivity and cause them to hang their harps upon the willows and weep as they sit along the banks of the River Chebar and remember the life they once lived back in Zion. God's concern is for the whole of creation and for all the people that dwell therein. When the people of God lose sight of the fact and begin acting as if only they and their nation really matter, it is time for a prophet to declare, "Thus says the Lord!" In other words, God does not sing, "God Bless America!"

Prophetic preaching focused the people's attention on the issues that were broader than how to worship or where to pray or what it is lawful to eat. The Mosaic covenant included a series of clear commandments to care for the widows, the orphans and the stranger who was among them. When the people of Israel lost sight of that commandment the prophets were there to remind them. When contemporary churches become more interested in praise and worship than in justice and righteousness, it is time for prophetic preaching.

Now as then, there is a need to lift up the conditions of widows, orphans and strangers. Today they take the form of single women, many of them living in great poverty, who have been abandoned by husbands and boyfriends and are raising children by themselves. The world is literally awash with children who have been left orphaned by the unrelenting ravages of HIV/AIDS, as well as by tribal warfare in Africa, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that use the methods of terror (shock and awe) to combat acts of terrorism around the world.

The stranger is also among us today, though here too the forms have shifted. Now they are the migrant workers who pick our food, the illegal immigrants who clean our homes and hotels, and the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and inside of Abu Ghraib prison who are under U.S. control but not afforded the protections of the U.S. Constitution, the Geneva Convention or the common decency that any U.S. citizen would expect and/or demand for themselves. The stranger is also that person with an "Arab sounding name" or that Sikh from India who, because his religion requires him to wear a turban or some other kind of head wrap, they are being caught up in the post-9/11 frenzy created and sustained by a government that is always on the lookout for a "person of interest."

How is the Bible used in prophetic preaching?

Prophetic preaching does not demand or even require the use of a text taken from one of the prophetic books of the OT. Nor does it require any reference to one of the prophets of the classical period that stretched from

the 8th to the 5th cent. BCE. Many sermons based upon a passage from a prophetic book have been far more “pathetic” than “prophetic.” That is usually the result of a preacher who did not have his/her focus on that which constantly occupied the biblical prophets, namely the fact that God’s people were living in disobedience to the covenant that had been established between God and the people.

Prophetic preaching occurs when the preacher seeks to bring the will of God to the attention of the people of God, and then, as Elizabeth Achtemeier observes, challenge them “to trust their Lord in all circumstances and to obey him with willing and grateful hearts.” (1998, 118–19) Prophetic preaching happens when the preacher has the courage to speak truth to power not only inside of the church building but also in the streets and board rooms and jail cells of the secular order. We must be willing to do this if we are to be faithful to and worthy of following in the footsteps of Samuel who confronted Saul, Nathan who confronted David, Amos who condemned Jeroboam, Jeremiah who challenged both Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and John the Baptist who did not grow mute or meek in the presence of Herod Antipas. In a time of “patriot pastors” and the belief that critiquing the leaders of the nation is both ungodly and unpatriotic, it is time for prophetic preaching. It is time to hear the words, “This is what the Lord says.”

The challenge of prophetic preaching is as old as the Christian community itself. No less a preacher than John Chrysostom, 337-407 (patriarch of Constantinople) offers a key insight into preaching prophetically when he observes: “Preachers must tame the multitudes’ undisciplined and dangerous desire for pleasure and make them listen with greater benefit, so that they allow themselves to listen and be led by him, and he is not led by their lusts.”¹ This is not far removed from the challenge given by Paul to Timothy in II Timothy 4: 1-6 in which Paul challenges his young friend to “correct, rebuke, and encourage”... during a time when people have itching ears that may cause them to turn aside from the truth,... and may result in the preacher having to endure hardship.”

There is nothing easy about prophetic preaching, especially within a black church that is fixated on the false gods of Prosperity Theology and on an approach to praise and worship that requires no service or sacrifice. It was that empty religion that was so roundly condemned in Amos 5, and we, too, must cry aloud and spare not. No pastor can or should engage in prophetic preaching every Sunday, because there are many other themes that must also be addressed over the course of a year. Cleophus LaRue makes this point with his five domains of experience in his book *The Heart of Black Preaching*. He talks about “personal piety, care of the soul, social justice, community concerns, and maintaining the institutional church.”² But as was said at the outset, every congregation can benefit

from an occasional sermon rooted in the power and passion of prophetic preaching!

With these goals, I perform an evaluation:

1. Measuring these goals by through the lens of church growth on Saturdays, Wednesdays, and other Bible Study times. The number of attendees in each of our services is counted each week and this information is kept in a database and used to analyze trends.
2. By talking to the church and those living in the community to determine whether they notice any positive change in the community. I take a verbal poll of the people by walking around the neighborhood with other leaders of my church. I also speak to city officials including the Mayor, the council person, the chief of police as well as other pastors.

Pastoring. Lastly, there is the ministerial competency of pastoring. Pastoring is a lost art. Nevertheless, in being a pastor you can retain many people.

One of the most common images or a model of ministerial leadership in both Christian and Jewish traditions is that of the pastor, or shepherd. It is a model of ministry that derives directly from God. Psalms 23 tells us that the Lord is our Shepherd. In the pages of the New Testament, Jesus appropriated this image to describe his own method of ministry and leadership. One of the earliest and most enduring images in Christian art is of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

As a pastor I:

- Caringly administer the sacraments and ceremonies of the community.
- Visit those who are ill, whether in the hospital or at home, including chronic shut-ins.

- Spend time and comfort those who are bereaved.
- Welcome, encourage and involve newcomers and future long time members, and seek contact with inactive members.
- Understand and practice soul care.
- Understand and practice self-care.

There are three primary strategies that I like to use as a pastor:

Strategy 1: Putting together a visitation plan. The purpose of the visitation plan is to meet with the families of the church so that they know I care about their needs, and to pray with and visit all who are sick and in the hospital.

Strategy 2: Have more frequent visits/meetings with those who are new into the faith. Care more intently for their needs as they make a transition to a new life with Christ.

Strategy 3: Having the attitude that I am not the pastor only for my church, but also the pastor for the whole community. For instance, when a community member needs funeral services they may use the church and I can officiate. If they have any social justice or educational issues, they can come to my church for guidance.

There are several ways I use to evaluate the gift of competency in pastoring:

1. Tithe and offerings. My finance team and I review the books to determine if the church has had an increase in giving.
2. Scanning after-service presence. This is an intangible measure. I look to see how many people rush to go home or stay behind to chat with one another. When membership stays and chats, it is a sign of a healthy church.
3. Notice whether the children and young people like to speak to me.
4. Note if people in my church or in the community are asking me to marry them, dedicate their children, or eulogize their loved one.

My team and I use an additional 12 church-growth indicators to evaluate both ministerial competencies and overall growth and renewal. Some are tangible and some not.

1. Vibrant Working Church: A Vibrant working church is not a tangible measure.

My leadership team asks these evaluation questions: Can you feel the vibrant spirit in the church? Are there more people doing ministry? Once, we were at the 80/20 state, where 20% of the people did 80% of the work. Now, we are at about 50% of the people working in ministry. We are heading in the right direction.

2. Church Growth: Every Sabbath Service I take attendance. From November 2016 to March 2018, we went from 30 people to 90 people consistently attending. In 2017, we baptized 33 new people into the church. The church is growing. Before I became their pastor there was conversation about shutting down the church and that conversation has ceased.

3. Inspirational Church Leadership. In the Harvard Business Review article *Why Inspiration Matters* Scott Kaufman wrote:

In a culture obsessed with measuring talent and ability, we often overlook the important role of inspiration. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities by allowing us to transcend our ordinary experiences and limitations. Inspiration propels a person from apathy to possibility, and transforms the way we perceive our own capabilities. Inspiration may sometimes be overlooked because of its elusive nature. Its history of being treated as supernatural or divine hasn't helped the situation. But as recent research shows, inspiration can be activated, captured, and manipulated, and it has a major effect on important life outcomes.³⁸

³⁸ Scott Barry Kaufman, "Why Inspiration Matters," *Harvard Business Review*, November 8, 2011, <https://hbr.org/2011/11/why-inspiration-matters> (accessed April 17, 2018).

I truly resonate with Scott Kaufman. People are telling me how they have been inspired by my preaching, leadership, vision, and passion. I believe in transforming people into the person that God wants them to be. I have seen people who were just coming to church and would leave even before the benediction. Now those very same people are staying and talking with other members. Others have told me and other leadership that they want to be involved in the ministry. It is not only my leadership, but also the leadership of others who have inspired the people with their words and actions.

4. Church Unity-In chapter 4 we spoke at length about church unity and its importance. We evaluate church unity by asking these questions: Are a lot of people gossiping about each other? Is the church doing more fun activities together? Is there a large attendance of the church when programs and services are happening?
5. Service in the Community. This is evaluated by how many service projects we have done and how great of an impact we have had. Over the last year, San Bernardino Community has had more and greater service projects for the community. As mentioned in chapter 5 the various ways we engaged our community—whether it was through a health fair or a block party—have been impactful. I have received awards from city officials in the work that we have been doing over the last year.
6. Participating in Conference Events. There are five different levels within the Seventh-day Adventist Church: the local church, the conference that oversees the local church, the Union that oversees the SDA Universities, the division that oversees the Unions, conferences, and churches, and the General Conference

headquarters that oversees everything throughout the world. Chapter 2 noted that there was not a clear perception of the church. As a result, we thought it would be wise to participate in more conference events so that other churches, pastors, and conference officials would know about our church.

7. Mission Driven and not Money Driven Church. We have a Budget Mission-

Driven Church. In the book *Becoming a Mission Driven Church* the authors say

Two of the most accurate ways to discover what an organization is really like is 1. To observe the organization in meetings, and 2 to take a look at the budget....Mission-based budgets are designed to demonstrate that an enterprise does what it is called to do. For church purposes, we need to be clear on how every element of our income and expense contributes not to our own goals but to the missions assigned to us by Jesus Christ.³⁹

Luke 12:34 says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” I work with my finance team and the church board to prioritize the money to ensure that mission is what drives us, not money. Another component of a Mission Driven Budget is faith. Sometimes the money may not be there to spend, so the church must pray and ask God in faith to help us accomplish what He has asked us to accomplish. I continue to let my church know the work that we are doing is not our work but God’s work and He will provide.

8. Spirit Filled Church. We evaluate if the church is a Spirit Filled Church by how

we are treating each other. The fruit of the Spirit is our frame of reference. The

Bible says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23).

³⁹ Paul Stewart Brantley, Daniel R. Jackson, and Michael R. Cauley, *Becoming a Mission-Driven Church: A Five-Step Strategy for Moving Your Church from Ordinary to Exceptional* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2015), 1.

9. Committed Church. A Committed Church is a Church that is committed to the mission and vision of the church. Within the Inland Empire there are many churches people can choose to attend. However, if the people are committed they will not church hop but will faithfully attend our church and be active in its ministry. We evaluate membership not only based on attendance but also based on who attends consistently. When someone wants to be a leader in the church, their commitment to the church is taken into consideration.
10. Praying Church. Encouraging the people to pray for the church and our community every day. We have prayer service on Wednesday and we are going to begin a weekly prayer call.
11. Effective Communication. Good Communication will allow the members and the community to feel as if they are involved. Two evaluation questions we ask are: “Is the information regarding church events being disseminated timely and through all outlets?” and “Is the Website and social media outlets up to date?”
12. Increase in Tithes and Offerings. The church has increased its tithes and offerings during the past year.

CHAPTER 7 NEXT STEPS:

I truly believe that the San Bernardino Community SDA Church is going in the right direction. We are meeting our goals, fulfilling the vision, and utilizing the Trinity of Ministry Model. The community knows about us, the perception of the other SDA Churches has changed, and our attendance is up. However, there is still a lot more work to do.

Our next Steps include a continual partnership with Loma Linda University, expanding the inner-city ministry program that has been at the church for 20 years, bringing a charter school to our campus, bringing in the dream academy, remodeling our gym, and building a ministry center.

The San Bernardino community has been identified as the intersection point of criminals and undesirables in the population. Some sources indicate there were 62 murders in 2016. The city suffers from having a large number of murders, being a major stop for child sex trafficking, and experiencing a 2015 terrorist attack and a 2017 school shooting. However, the San Bernardino community has a best neighbor in San Bernardino Community Church, located in the middle of San Bernardino, providing hope and faith to a community sorely in need. During a recent Bible study, I told some students that God promised we would each receive a mansion in heaven. The student responded, “Why would I want a mansion so I can get robbed?” Although our church has more work

to do we are not tired, but will continue to do our part in sharing God's love and changing daily lives in our community.

This challenging but necessary work is being completed in large part by the young adults within SBCC as well as young adults who have committed to partner with the SBCC community. They have accepted the role of mentors, teachers and support personnel to the community youth through the IMPACT and Inner City Youth Ministry programs, and through these vehicles have worked selflessly to change lives since 1988.

San Bernardino Community SDA Church was the natural church to house the ministries that involve young adults, due not only to its location in the heart of the need, but also to the hearts of its members. SBCC evolved around a mission to minister to the community, build warm relationships, and provide a vehicle for Jesus' love to be demonstrated through students in the surrounding community as they nurture those in need. This is best exemplified by the Loma Linda University (LLU) students' active participation and mentorship in the Inner City Ministry (ICM)/ ICM is organized and run in conjunction with the church's ICM co-coordinator as well as the IMPACT ministry. It regularly reaches into the San Bernardino community, and also established and runs the Health expo, responding to medical, dental, spiritual and physical needs community neighbors may present. The LLU students are in large part young adults who all share a desire to positively affect this community, and share God's love in a tangible way. Their participation is not confined to community outreach, as they are regularly involved in other aspects of ministry, but to adult and youth Sabbath School and associated programs as well. They also lead praise and worship and provide music ministry for the main 11:00 service. Additionally, they are involved in providing regular mentor relationships in a

Pathfinder group comprised of community children who attend the program as their initial introduction to the Christian faith.

The immediate surrounding area of San Bernardino Community Church is densely populated with a large number of children. There are four public schools (2 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high) within one mile of the church, all operating at full capacity. As has been noted, a large number of families have one parent or more incarcerated. This situation led San Bernardino Community Church to partner with related ministerial opportunities such as the Dream Academy. The primary mission of this academy is to support families and school-aged children and increase high school graduation rates in the community. The academy operates in a community environment with high gang involvement, alcohol/drug abuse, poverty and domestic violence. In most instances, the prevalence of these problems is higher among this population than the national average.

San Bernardino Community Church recognizes that in order to be successful, every organization must take an accurate strategic assessment of its goals relative to its resources. A SWOT analysis—an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats—helps the organization identify processes and needs necessary to attain success.

Applying SWOT analysis to SBCC, we can find that that our faith-based organization has multiple strengths. Aside from the strong level of faith and love (which is likely common in many churches), SBCC is very strong in the presence of every demographic group in the membership. Children, youth, young adults and the elderly are all present. Additionally, the membership is multicultural, and this diversity adds strength through the differing perspectives, varieties of solutions and ability to relate and connect

to all demographics in the community. Additionally, the SBCC membership is active and eager to be involved, which allows the work to be spread evenly within the group instead of to a few people prone to burn out. Although our membership is few in numbers, our partnership with many young adult groups from the Loma Linda University community allows for a significant ministerial asset. A final strength, and perhaps the most meaningful, is that I lead effectively by example, and do not hesitate to help someone in need, whether that means making a presentation during a service to ensure a community member receives emergency support, or being present during many programs and community outreach activities.

SBCC's has weaknesses that we are actively working to overcome. One of our main weaknesses is the size of our membership. Our membership is small when we consider all of the projects we are attempting to undertake. The administration has to be cognizant of attempting too many projects, so as not to tire out the members. The members will whole-heartedly attempt any project endorsed and supported by the church. That presents an awesome responsibility, and could easily exacerbate the challenges of our small membership. The other blatant weakness we face is financial. Although it is not surprising that a small congregation may not be able to accumulate a lot of financial resources, our congregation resides in a community plagued by poverty, violence, crime, low employment, etc. To meet these needs, we recognize that the community requires not only time and manpower but also money.

SBCC recognizes the opportunities specific to our congregation, and the desire to change this world in God's name keeps us. Our immediate focus is on providing resources specific to the needs of the community, including housing needs, drug

rehabilitation opportunities, family counseling, job placement, etc. We recognize it is difficult for people to understand God's love when they are hungry and have no prospect for food.

SBCC's threats cannot be ignored, as we are required to be vigilant and aware. We recognize in our community the high level of vandalism and violence against the church, lack of security and the need for safety in the neighboring streets and extreme poverty in the surrounding community. Not only is this situation the reality for our church, but most of the members from that community have come to internalize this reality as their only way of life. We are called to protect our physical church as well as to demonstrate a different mentality and an alternate way of life to the children.

The Inner City Youth Ministry is a one of SBCC's longstanding outreach programs. It has a two-fold purpose: to share the love of Christ between mentors and youth and to allow mentors the opportunity to serve as positive role models for children from the community. It started as a two-week Vacation Bible School in 1988 and has become one of the driving forces of the continued existence of the church. This program has utilized the altruistic nature of young adults from neighboring universities who minister to the community through weekly tutoring for elementary through high school students. Mentoring students is performed on a one-on-one level, and sponsorships are provided for youth to attend the Pine Springs Ranch summer camp. To create opportunities to serve as leaders for the community Pathfinders group was formed.

IMPACT San Bernardino is a ministry started by young adults to influence the San Bernardino community. This ministry involves a group of young adults from Loma Linda University who engage the church, joining members in going door-to-door, talking

to people about God, the church, and the community member's physical needs. Loma Linda is a Seventh-Day Adventist coeducational health sciences university. The students also provide a monthly health expo at SBCC, which includes dental health services, nutritional information resources, counseling resources, medical counseling, spiritual counseling, smoking cessation counseling and immediate food and fellowship for the community.

As a fully integrated church network with successfully functioning young adult and youth programs supported by the multi-generational, multi-cultural church membership at large, the church feels it is on a path to continual growth and sustainability. We must enhance the existing ministry by adding additional resources, responding to additional needs of the families with whom we interact. We need to expand the current tutoring program from once weekly to three times a week, allowing for greater involvement of the current university population. We need to add job placement support and counseling opportunities, utilizing more of the skills the young adult university student volunteers possess to assist the adults in the community achieve necessary goals. Finally, we should expand our presence as an on-site safe haven for young adults through the expansion of Friday night vespers and Sabbath celebration programs. It has become increasingly evident that our young adult population participates in church programs when they have the opportunity to share their faith with others. The Sabbath celebration programs include Saturday night socials where all of the demographics of the church are able to interact and enjoy each other's company in harmony.

Although there is a current assumption that the young adult demographic is drifting away from the church, the young adults in our community are pairing with San Bernardino Community Church to do church in a more relevant, practical and meaningful way, meeting the needs of both the church and community.

Most of our programs are onsite, and the neighborhood children are bused to and from the church. The young adult university students periodically select additional off-campus programs to incorporate into their mentorship. Those programs are approved and supported by the church membership at large on a case-by-case basis. To make this a reality we have voted to bring in the US Dream Academy.

The US Dream Academy was founded by Wintley Phipps a pastor, world-renowned vocal artist, motivational speaker, and education activist. He is the founder, president and chief executive officer of the U.S. Dream Academy, Inc., a national after-school program that aims to break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration by giving children the skills and vision necessary to lead productive and fulfilling lives. The Dream Academy program offers skill-building, character-building and dream-building activities in a safe after-school environment utilizing both one-to-one mentoring and state of the art technology to deliver on-line academic enrichment to children of incarcerated parents and those falling behind in school.⁴⁰

The US Dream Academy Board has voted to bring their program to San Bernardino Community SDA Church. The information was sent out to donors and potential donors

The Church also voted to bring in a charter school, Savant Prep Academy of Business. Savant Prep Academy of Business was founded by three young adults. The

⁴⁰ Wintley Phipps – Faith Radio, <http://myfaithradio.com/authors/wintley-hipps/> (accessed April 17, 2018).

lead founder, Eva Tillman, was born, raised and has done all of her education in San Bernardino. Savant's website reads:

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a "savant" is "a person of learning; *especially* one with detailed knowledge in some specialized field." Therefore, at Savant Preparatory Academy of Business, we want our students to identify their strengths and become masters of their craft. With our guidance, our scholars will develop an intrinsic desire to discover, own, and use their gifts to create businesses that positively influence the future and rebuild our community.

Savant says that

To be educated is not simply to reach mastery in core subjects such as English language arts and math, but to experience an "enlightenment" that will awaken a passion for lifelong learning. A true educational experience, it says, will help children develop a sense of purpose that will be the driving force of success for the rest of their lives. Savant intends to give children the space to explore abilities that will make them great entrepreneurs and leaders.⁴¹

With the Dream Academy and the Savant Prep Academy of Business, our church will be open seven days a week. When people go on Google, instead of finding that SBC is only open on Saturdays, they will find that it is open every day of the week. That is ministry!

Currently, we are trying to raise \$100,000 in order to remodel our gymnasium. By remodeling, the gymnasium can operate basketball leagues, tournaments, volleyball leagues and other tournaments for the community. These leagues will operate mostly on weekends and in the summer to help keep the young people off the streets. We will also remodel and re-organize our community service room so that we can give more clothes and food to give away to families in need.

⁴¹ Savant Preparatory Academy of Business, "Why Savant," <https://savantprepacademy.com/about/> (accessed April 17, 2018).

Lastly, we are going to build a Ministry Center on our campus, to enlarge and enhance everything we do. The Ministry Center will house the Dream Academy, The Savant Prep Academy of Business, and will house our free vision and dental clinic.

As a pastor I am eager to make a difference in the lives of others. I truly believe God has placed me at San Bernardino Community SDA Church for such a time as this. In the near future, I believe that we will be a model church not only in Adventism but for the entire body of Christ.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Demonstration Project Proposal

NO MORE EMPTY SEATS

By

JERROLD THOMPSON

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary, 2018

Challenge Statement

The San Bernardino Community SDA Church is in the heart of San Bernardino. Surrounded by 4 schools, two elementary, one junior high, and one high school, all less than a mile away from the church. SBC has a facility that is tailored made for service in this community. It has a sanctuary that can fit 400 people, 4 major classrooms, a chapel, a library, and a gymnasium none of which are being utilized to its full potential to serve the community. The solution is to build the congregation spiritually, change the culture, and then Evangelize the community.

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INTRODUCTION

The Potential

“I For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

November 13th, 2016 is when the journey began. I have pastored in different churches and different cities and now, finally, I had returned to a city that I loved, San Bernardino. It was where my ministry had and, I was back. The city of my return was the same, but the church I was coming to was not. Growing up in Los Angeles the San Bernardino area was foreign to me, even though it was only a one hour and one minute drive away. But after studying in Texas for 7 years, I moved back to California the Inland Empire, to work in San Bernardino County and that is where my love for San Bernardino began.

The round trip I was completing on November 13th, 2016 began eleven years earlier, in 2005. That was the year of my first ministerial position, as a youth Pastor at the 16th Street Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in San Bernardino. My stay there was to last six years, moving to Palm Springs in 2011. There, I became the senior pastor of a small church that showed potential for growth. And, grow it did. During my four years, membership rose tenfold—from 20 to 200 . From there, I was invited to become the Executive Pastor at a very prominent church in Riverside in what turned out to be a brief stay.. I served there 15 months through November 2016. But it was in the ninth month of this tenure that I was approached to become interim senior of the San Bernardino

Community SDA. The initial offer was for a three-month temporary posting. But at the expiration of the three months, I was invited to remain as permanent Pastor and I did. My round-trip journey was now complete.

Returning to San Bernardino was a major decision. My family loved being in Riverside and in a church where everything was going well. People have always asked why I left a big church in Riverside for a small church in San Bernardino. To them, to my family, and to my own mind, the response was the same: potential.

I did pray, I did fast, and I did speak with my family. All along, that word “potential” kept ringing in my mind. I saw, felt, and heard it within me time and time again. Three major areas of potential became clear to me: the Campus, the community, and the congregation.

The Campus

San Bernardino Community SDA has one of the best facilities in all of San Bernardino, particularly in terms of its size and location. The Sanctuary is beautiful! Its colors are burgundy and gold. It seats about 400 people in 3 rows with short pews on the side and long pews in the middle. It has vaulted ceilings with stain glass windows. There is a choir loft and a baptistery, as well as a stage with two levels. The lighting is suitable for televising events and the sound system is good. With all its good things, the Sanctuary had room to become even better. An installed camera system could give the church online presence. A mothers’ room could make church attendance more convenient for the mothers can make churches grow. A lobby could be made more inviting, the fellowship hall made more modern, and the board room made to look and feel more true to its name.

On the campus we have a chapel that can seat 100 people. In the chapel there is a stage as well. The chapel can be used for weddings, youth programs, and an overflow room. Currently, we rent it out to a Spanish Church that meets on Sundays.

The Library gives the campus a feel of education and scholarship. The church is surrounded by 4 schools and a university that is only 10 minutes away. The Library lets those who come on our campus know that we advocate education. The potential for students to study, use the computers, and receive tutoring is there.

There are 4 classrooms on the campus. The classrooms are currently used for early morning bible study for the young people. However, there is potential for an after school program. The fourth classroom is occupied with Steel Drums. Steel Drums are musical instrument originating from the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The church was well known for its Steel Drums. The Steel Drum Band has traveled all over the world playing the Caribbean gospel sound. Since 2014, the Steel band has not been functioning consistently. So the potential that I saw was to resurrect the Steel Band and bring uniqueness back to the church.

The Parking lot is huge. The challenge is that it needs to be paved and lines need to be drawn for parking spaces. After those things are completed we can bring in a carnival for the community. The community will have a blast. The church has two Vans that are being used to pick people up in the community for church.

There is an open field in between the Sanctuary and the education wing. That is a play area where there is sand, a tunnel, swings and an open grassy play area. I can see us having a movie night under the stars for the kids.

Lastly, the Gymnasium. The gymnasium has a kitchen, a community service room that stores food and clothes. This is a stage for performances there are showers in the bathroom and a full court basketball floor. For me the gymnasium was the final hook. I saw the potential of hosting basketball and volleyball tournaments. Saturday night socials, the showers that are in the bathroom it could be used for the homeless to take a hot shower and the clothing area where we could give them clean underwear hygiene products and a bag of food.

I truly believe that the campus used to be a school. There is so much potential for ministry to be done at a high level. From the edifice to the location to the need in the community, nothing but potential.

The Community

The church that I pastor, San Bernardino Community Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the heart of the community. Located at the corner of G and 17th San Bernardino community is just 5 min from downtown and 10 minutes from CAL State San Bernardino and less than 1 mile from 4 schools, a high school, a middle school, and two elementary schools

Every day, many students walk by the church, and many cars drive by the church. The church sits right behind San Bernardino High School the first high school even in San Bernardino.

However, San Bernardino is the fourth worst city in America According to Area Vibes. Area Vibes rank cities on major factors.

- ¹Amenities lower scores for fewer nearby Amenities like: grocery stores, restaurants, coffee shops, schools, park, libraries, etc.
- Cost of living, lower scores for high cost of goods and services, groceries, health care, having transportation or utilities
- Crime Statistics scores for high violent crime and high property crime. Violent crimes are more heavily weighted.
- Education; lower scores for low test scores and high student to teacher ratio.
- Employment; lower scores for low median household income and high unemployment rates.
- Housing: lower scores for high housing price to median household income and low appreciation rates.

¹ AreaVibes

- Weather lower scores for average temperature wonder 70 degrees and 75 degrees high precipitation

Out of all of the 7 categories only on #7 the weather does San Bernardino rank high in number. To be specific, the amenities in the city of San Bernardino vary, for where my church is located it is considered a food desert.

City Data.com²

The cost of living is not comparable to the income that people have in the city. 41% of the residents in San Bernardino are below the poverty line compared to 20% for the entire state of CA.

Press Enterprise

The crime in San Bernardino has dropped in 2017. (I will give you a reason later in the document) According to the 2016 states, San Bernardino recorded 63 homicides the worst in 20 years.³

Turn Charts.com

The education states in San Bernardino that 50% of the residents do not have a high school diploma, and only 5% of the residents have a Bachelor Degree.⁴

Zillow Spelling Besting

The housing in San Bernardino is too expensive compared to the average family income. The average household income in San Bernardino is 38774 and the average cost of a home is 256,400.⁵

² City data.com

³ Press enterprise.com

⁴ Turn charts.com

⁵ zillow.com

In 2015 San Bernardino was magnified globally because of the regional center shootings that took the lives of 14 people. Then 2016 the murder rate sky rocketed. San Bernardino is the biggest county in the world and one of the most violent cities. However, the Bible says in Romans 5:20, But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

The Congregation

I pastor a Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist are:

The **Seventh-day Adventist Church** is a Protestant Christian denomination^[3] distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the seventh day of the week in Christian and Jewish calendars as Sabbath, and by its emphasis on the imminent Second Coming (advent) of Jesus Christ. The denomination grew out of the Millerite movement in the United States during the mid-19th century and was formally established in 1863. Among its founders was Ellen G. White, whose extensive writings are still held in high regard by the church.⁶

Much of the theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church corresponds to common Protestant Christian teachings, such as the Trinity and the infallibility of Scripture. Distinctive teachings include the unconscious state of the dead and the doctrine of an investigative judgment. The church is known for its emphasis on diet and health, its "holistic" understanding of the person, promotion of religious liberty, and its conservative principles and lifestyle.

The world church is governed by a General Conference, with smaller regions administered by divisions, union conferences, and local conferences. It currently has a

⁶ Wikipedia

worldwide baptized membership of over 20 million people, and 25 million adherents. As of May 2007, it was the twelfth-largest religious body in the world,¹ and the sixth-largest highly international religious body.¹ It is ethnically and culturally diverse, and maintains a missionary presence in over 215 countries and territories. The church operates numerous schools, hospitals, and publishing houses worldwide, as well as a humanitarian aid organization known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

The distinct history of my local church is: ⁷Eighteen years ago when Valley Fellowship SDA Church moved to Rialto, a group (initially known as Valley Mission) was born out a vision to continue a ministry in San Bernardino. In January 1990 the Victoria SDA Church graciously opened its doors to us. For two years it became our home as we considered this our permanent place of worship. In April 1992 we started worshipping at Waterman facility. It was an ecstatic feeling mixed with some trepidation. The uphill climb was just beginning, but God would be faithful to provide all of our needs. I The Children's ministry has always been an integral part of the group. This ministry became one of the catalysts contributing to our survival.

A van was purchased to transport the inner city youth weekly to our church. Each summer the children have been sponsored to camp at Pine Springs Ranch: and thus has proved to be an invaluable experience for these youngsters. For three years we worshipped at Waterman. This period was clouded by reports that the city would purchase the facility to make a thoroughfare through the property. It was heart breaking that the church had been sold. It would be demolished and replaced by concrete and asphalt. All that would remain would be the memories of those who struggled in the 70s

⁷ Local Church Magazine

and early 80s to establish this lighthouse. Realizing that we could not change the inevitable, we began searching for another place to worship. Again, God blessed us with a quaint little sanctuary (the Allen chapel) on Norman and Foisey. Although cramped for space for the children's programs, our enthusiasm to move forward did not wane. For thirteen months we Fellowship led there, but realized we had to build or purchase a place of our own.

Through the efforts of Drs. Barker and Newborn, a place was found on Tippecanoe between 4th and 5th streets. The membership rallied to do the necessary work to prepare it for worship. What a grand day that first Sabbath of February 1997 was. As members and friends came to worship, they were greeted outside by persons playing "When The Saints Go Marching In" on their harmonicas. At last, a place to establish roots. We knew that it was only by the grace of God that we had come this far. From our inception, various individuals have played key roles in our development: pastors Rodney Pearson, Henry Fuss, Lyndon Parsons, Cheryl and Michael McMillan.

Other Individuals include Drs. Hendricks Edwards, Lynbrook Barker, Lloyd Dayes and Richard Neil. Over the next five years we developed from an affiliate of the Victoria church to become a company. We finally attained church status in 2002 under the leadership of Drs. Craig Newborn and Clyde Cassimy. In January 2003 we welcomed Pastor Michael Mupfawa.

It again became clear that our church home would allow no room for growth. It was sold and property purchased on 6th street to build our permanent home: or so we thought. As the plans were developed, we rented the Greater Bethel Baptist Church on the Corner of 2nd and Allen streets. Just as the plans were being submitted to the city of

Highland for approval, our present location was discovered by one of our youth, Alven Norman. The members rallied with the aid of the conference to purchase the church at 1696 North G Street. A line of credit was secured to complete the necessary repairs.

When I officially arrived at the church 13 years later from the purchase of the new building the average number in attendance was about 30 people. The church is predominately black church with people from the Caribbean, Central America, and America. The Church has other Nationalities such as Caucasian and Hispanic but that is a very low percent. Most of the members are professional's and commute in. However, we are growing into a church that lives in the community and are not as well educated.

The Challenge Statement

The San Bernardino Community SDA Church is in the heart of San Bernardino, surrounded by 4 schools, two elementary, one junior high, and one high school, all less than a mile away from the church. SBC has a facility that is tailor made for service in this community. It has a sanctuary that can fit 400 people, 4 major classrooms, a chapel, a library, and a gymnasium none of which are being utilized to its full potential to serve the community. The solution is to build the congregation spiritually, change the culture, and then Evangelize the community.

CHAPTER 1 THE BARRIERS

But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

No More Empty Seats is a dissertation on how to fill the seats of many of our Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America. However, there are three barriers that need to be discussed: Church decline, the perception of San Bernardino Community, and the question of will the congregation buy into the vision.

Across all of Christianity church attendance is on the decline. So this first barrier is not exclusive to Adventism or my local church but is a systemic global Christian problem. Thomas Rainer gives 7 reason of why he believes that church attendance is on the decline.

The Information is found in Thomas is Seven key reasons your church attendance maybe declining.

Though addressing the issue of declining attendance cannot be covered in a brief blog post, I hope it will be helpful to share some high-level perspectives. See if any of these seven reasons apply to your church.

1 “Cultural Christians” no longer see the need to attend church. “Cultural

Christian” is really an oxymoron. I refer here to those men and women who once attended church for social, political, or business reasons. Most of them no longer feel it is necessary to be in church to be a regarded citizen in the community.

- 2 Church members are attending less frequently.** I have noted in other articles how I see this development as potentially the greatest contributor to attendance decline. Three decades ago, a very active church member attended three times a week. Today we call those who attend three times a month an active church member.
- 3 Expectations are lower for church members.** One of the reasons church members attend less frequently is that very little is expected of them in many churches. If we expect little of our members, that is exactly what we will get.
- 4 Insufficient emphasis on groups.** This reality may be one of the most neglected areas of church life. Groups of all kinds – home groups, small groups, Sunday school classes, life groups, and others – are key to assimilation and greater commitment. The importance of groups must begin with the pastor and all other key leaders in the church.
- 5 Inward focus.** In too many churches, the emphasis is on “me, myself and I.” Some members are more concerned about the temperature in the worship center than the eternal destinations of their neighbors. The “me-focused” church is on its way to decline.
- 6 No clearly defined process of discipleship.** Eric Geiger and I reported on this issue in our book, *Simple Church*. Growing churches are much more likely to have a clearly grasped and implemented process of discipleship than declining churches.
- 7 No strategic plans for multi-venues or multi-campus.** As I noted in my post Monday, the trend of multi-venue and multi-campus churches may be the most

significant in church practices in the past three decades. Even smaller churches are now planning for more than one site or venue. Those churches not making such plans are more likely to be declining.

Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church Academy to reach on retention done by the official archiver, saturation and research 2014 more than half 50.7% of lapsed and formed church members had attended the Seventh-day Adventist church for five or more years before they had learned. In a recent study 2013 conducted by the centuries of creative ministry former and inactive Seven-day Adventist were asked what contributed to leaving the church the most. Here are the top three reasons.

- No big issue—just drifted away (28%)
- Lack of compassion for the hunting (25%)
- Moral failure on my Part (19%)

A study conducted by Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research asked what event triggered former members decision to leave the Seventh-day Adventist church. The most significant reasons respondents gave for learning were.

- Perceived hypocrisy
- Marital difficulties
- Lack of funds in the church
- High level of conflict in local congregation
- Family conflicts others than within marriages
- Personal conflict with local church members

For many Seventh-day Adventist, their local church did not prove a loving and supporting community. When they experienced conflict or difficulties they stopped attending church and often nobody noticed they had left.”

Witten my local church some of the same reasons why people have left the Christian church and why people have left the Seventh-day Adventist church do not apply to my local church. Here are those that apply:

- No big issues just drifted
- Marital difficulties
 - High level of conflict in local congregation
 - Family conflicts others than within marriages.

As I have poled my local church they give three reasons of why the church has declined. The church has attributed its low attendance to three reasons.

- Leadership
- The search of Evangelism to the Community
- Being able to disciple those that may come from the community. Also those that do come from other SDA churches.
- Solution: The solution is to improve the leadership of the church, begin programs that will become a benefit to the community, have small groups and activities for people to participate in so that they can grow spiritually.

Barrier 2 The Perception of the Church

San Bernardino Community is a church not really known to other Seventh Adventist in the Inland Empire. When people think of a black Seventh-day Adventist church in San Bernardino everyone thinks of the Great 16th Street Church, 16th Street is

where I started my ministry as a youth Pastor. I myself did not know much about San Bernardino Community. In fact, the name was changed to San Bernardino Community from Del Rosa SDA Church. I had attended a service their before and also preached there, but I did not know much about the church. However, the perception of the church was not bad but not anything to draw people or pastors. The perception was that it was a small church not only in membership but also in edifice. It was known to be in a rough community but the church was not doing anything to reach the community. Lastly, it had a perception that they were very conservative and did not mingle with any other group of people besides themselves.

Well, before I go any further those perceptions were all wrong!

Barrier 3 Will they Buy into the Vision?

Anytime a leader steps into a new situation there is always trepidation, I am know different. After spending time in conversation with key leaders I understood that they have tried to a lot of things before in the community but of no avail. There were some concerns with leadership style and how I would relate to the church, the community, and especially the young people. So, there was a definite barrier there.

Despite all the barriers, I truly feel God called me to this church. And since God Called He will take care of all things. It will be a tough road ahead but as the Bible says: Matthew 19:26 says, With God All things are Possible.

CHAPTER 2 IMPLEMENTATION

As stated in my challenge statement three solutions that I believe will help fill the seats of San Bernardino Community. Those three solutions were: build the congregation spiritually, change the culture, and then evangelize the community.

Build the Congregation Spiritually

Matthew 6:33 says, But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. I was impressed by God that if I lead the people into a deeper spiritual relationship with the Lord that everything else would fall into place. So, I used three major ways to launch the congregation into a deeper relationship with the Lord.

The first thing I did was preached week after week on discipleship. I preached sermons on faith, the Holy Spirit, Prayer fasting, deep study of the word, having a recommitting their lives to the Lord.

Secondly, I encouraged and promoted more time that the church should be together. The number one time in which the church will show up is on Saturday Mornings at 11:00 am for our Main Weekly worship service. However, I promoted and push that people will come to Sabbath School which is our early morning bible study classes, and lastly our Wednesday Night Recharge, which a weekly service geared for prayer over the church and community.

Thirdly, I spent more time in visitation, visiting in the homes of the members, at a restaurant, or just at the church. I wanted to get to know my members likes and dislikes. Wanted to let them know about the vision and mission of the church. Also, I just wanted them to know that I and the leadership cared about them.

Lastly, I have learned over the years of pastoring that there is no pulpit like your own pulpit. Your congregation wants to hear from their pastor. I cannot afford to travel and help build up other ministries if my ministry is not at the level it should be at. God has assigned me to San Bernardino Community church and there I will be faithful to the task given to me.

When you build the people spiritual the church will grow. There will be revival in the church. Membership will start telling their families and friends, co-workers and other members. People will see it by the change in their life. Matthew 6:33 is the primary text. Another scripture to exemplify my point is “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Matthew 7:25-27. When the foundation is Jesus no matter what adversities may hit the church the church will always stand.

Changing the Culture

Changing the culture of any organization could be a difficult task. When people have been doing something a certain way for a long time, it takes a lot of energy even if there were not many positive results. However, I use two strategies to change the culture;

vision and training. This is the booklet that was given to the church. The booklet has a lot of information but what is poignant to help change the vision is the Mission Statement, Mission Text, Moto, Core Values, Vision Statement, and Logo.

Training is essential to culture change. Within my local church we have a policy to establish a nominating committee that will vote in new officers or keep the officers that are currently in place. The nominating committee completed their task and now is time for training. There are two training scheduled for the month of January. I wanted to train the church in how to work in a community that has a great need. I can and will do some of the training myself. However, I am blessed to have a plethora of colleagues that can help train my congregants.

By changing the culture for the better the morale of the church will increase. When the morale of the church is increased then work is done more effectively and efficiently. With proper training the membership is all on the same page and then synergy exists. With the increased morale and synergy the work of the church will become contagious.

Evangelize the Community

My church is located right by Loma Linda University, as a result there are a lot of medical students that need community service hours and that want to do ministry.

A Medical student came to my church and asked me if he and a group of students could begin helping us do connect with the community. My answer and the answer to the board was an affirmative Yes. So, we started a ministry entitled, Impact San Bernardino. Impact San Bernardino is a student lead ministry that goes door to door in our community to connect the community with the church. Every first Sabbath of the month after church

they will go into the community pass out books, any flyers that we might have, ask them what their needs are. Any needs that they have will be reported back to the church and the church will find a way to assist them. Every first Sabbath we have a social for the church and the community.

Another aspect of Impact San Bernardino is their Wednesday Night service. Every Wednesday the students faithfully come and pick up kids in the community and give them snacks, play games with them, and teach them about the love of Christ. This service has grown. The first three months there was no one came, then three girls started to come, now we have about 10 kids showing up each Wednesday. The age group is between 5 to 10. As the students engage the children they help us bridge the gap with their parents as well. So, we actually have a family attending our Sabbath morning services. Finally, the last aspect of the ministry is focused on the homeless. Every third Sabbath morning we have free showers for the homeless. Some walk, others we pick up in a central location and bring them to the church early Saturday morning, where they receive a hot shower, clean clothes, and breakfast. Those that are able to stay for our service receive lunch when church is over. Impact San Bernardino has been a true blessing to our church. We have not only engaged the community but also have engaged with Young Adults in service to Christ, the Church, and the Community.

Another way we have evangelized the community is through personal evangelism and with Bible workers. The job of a Bible worker is to give Bible studies to those in the church requesting Bible Studies. It is to train people in the church on how to give a Bible Study and lastly to go into the community and find new Bible studies. The Church has hired a full time Bible worker that is also an experienced Pastor. He is constantly and

consistently bringing new people to the church. He is training a group of people who want to learn how to give a Bible Study. We have already baptized about 20 new people because of his efforts.

Personal ministries has not really taking off as of yet. However, in this new year with our new personal ministries leader I believe it will. Personal ministries will really impact the church, because you will have the people building spiritual relationships with others that they have relationships with: people on their jobs, their neighbors, friends, and family members. Our new leader will teach them how to engage those that are in their sphere of influence on spiritual matters in a way that is not intrusive.

Discipleship is another vital component of evangelism. As much as I love to baptize families, I like them to stay in the church so that they could be nurtured. Baptism is not the end all be all, but it is the beginning steps of a new life Jesus Christ. So, here is our discipleship plan

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question 1:

What does the Bible tell us about church growth.

The first century church started at Pentecost. Jesus ascended to heaven, 10 days prior. The disciples are in the upper room run. Act 2:1-4.

This is the beginning of the church it is called the Day of Pentecost. Act 2:41 says that 3,000 souls were added to them. They were added to the 120 disciples that were in the upper room.

Acts 2: 42-47 teaches what church must do in order to grow. There must be unity in the church Act 2:1 and 44. When the church is on one accord to Holy Spirit will fall in a copious manner.

The Bible says in verse 6 that everyone heard Peter's sermon in their own tongue. I believe the application is that when you are a growing church your church is

1. one accord and then the Holy Spirit will allow one to meet the people where they are.
2. Must continue to preach and teach the word. Acts 2: 42. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

3. A church must be unselfish. Acts 2: 45 “and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” When church is a giving church inside and outside of the membership. They are displaying the attitude of Christ.

Understanding Acts 2: 46 says that the disciples were going house to house having a meal with families. A church that eats together stays together. Also the morale is built up within the church because their leader has come to their home.

The church must be open every day. Verse 46 says that they continued daily in one accord in the temple. I believe that there are qualitative results for when the church is open daily. People will just show up members will just drop by. The mind of the leader begins to think what we can do for the community which we serve, since the church is open. The pastor’s mind begins to think of all the people he needs to visit programs that need to be created other work that needs to get done. All because the church is open.

Give God the Glory. Verse 47: When God is glorified, God will provide. When people are humble God will exalt.

Have favor with people. Having favor within people is important, because God works through people. You build a rapport with people, people will work for you, fight for you, and help you.

When these 7 steps are done not only will you keep the people but you will add to the church daily as it says in Verse 47. That is the charge between church attendances in the 20th century vs. 21st century.

Research Question #2

What is the change between the 20th century, regarding church attendance, and the 21st century?

In the 1950's there in the great awakening of religion. However from the 1960s to the 1970s there was a great decline. Then from the 1980's to the 21st century things remained pretty steady. Now the church over the past 15 years has been in a great decline.

The Biggest charge has to do with the fact that people are no longer religious. Or even feel that religion is important.

In the article, "Why is church attendance declining Even among committed Christians," Dave Murrow states that the hallmark of the 20th century evangelicalism was the focus on individual unction. Personal salvation a personal relationship with Jesus personal devotion, all without much support from the church. As a result the emphasis was more on individualism rather than the community. The community of believers will gather once a week for spiritual food and physical food.

Research 3:

What are some practical ways that can be used in order for the church to grow?

In research Question 1 I gave the principles from the book of Acts in growing a church. Here is a model that I have used that works. I call it the Trinity of Ministry: Leadership, Evangelism, and Discipling.

Leadership - Each pastor must set the vision of the church. Then they must have people buy into the vision. The pastor has people to buy into the vision. Lastly, the vision must be executed.

Evangelism- the pastor must organize revivals, community programs health programs and others that are will bring them into the church. Not only bring them but have them receiving Bible Studies to be baptized into the church. Evangelism is the only way the church can experience true growth.

Discipleship- through Discipling the church will continue to grow consistently.
The pastor must teach people that they must live for Christ and go back into their
communities and bring people to church.

CHAPTER 4 THE BIBLICAL MODEL

As a Spiritual leader I had to go to my source to hear and see what it has to say on how to grow a church. My source is none other than the Bible, the Word of God. It is a Lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. So, the question that I asked was, “What can we learn from the Book of Acts regarding Church Growth? Let’s take a look.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples were in the upper room, deciding who should replace Judas, who had hung himself, praying, agonizing, getting things right with each other and God. After 10 days of these things the Bible says that Peter preached 3000 souls were baptized into the church and that is day the scriptures call Pentecost. That was the beginning of the first century church. Acts 2:42-47 is a true biblical model of church growth. From the book of Acts I believe that they are 9 steps to church growth.

1. Unity Acts 2:1 and 44 says: So, I believe the first step to growing a church is Unity. Unity must first start within the leadership. The disciples, as previously mentioned, were unified in the upper room. They were on one accord. That one accord is in purpose. When the leadership is on one accord then the members will follow. In verse 44 we see this. Within my local church and churches across to not have any empty seats, leadership must be in sync, unified, on one accord. Never saying that there will not be disagreements, but leadership must be unified on purpose. It will create a cohesiveness, synergy that will infiltrate into the church and the church will catch fire.

2. Applied Learning-Verse 42, there are three major elements embedded within. 42.

The first one we want to look at is what I call Applied Learning. The Bible says, that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. The doctrine of the apostles was Christ. The doctrine that says Jesus came, lived, died, rose again, and He is coming back to take us Home. They kept on encouraging, strengthening each other with that truth. This is what I ask of my members to call and encourage each other in the Lord. Spend time reflecting on the Pastors sermon and other scriptures so that you may find strength in whatever you may be going through.
3. Fellowship and Breaking Bread. I truly believe The Lord created us to be social beings. There is power, accountability, and strength when the church fellowships with one another. When sharing a meal with someone it shows that you want to get to know them, be their friend. If it were up to me we would have fellowship meal at the church every Sabbath. Right now, we consistently have it once a month; we also will have it if there is a special day. We also, have once month Saturday night socials. The more church comes together under the banner of Christ, the church will be stronger and healthier. The Bible says, where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in the midst.
4. Prayers - The New Testament Church not only encouraged each other in the Lord, not only fellowshiped and ate together, but most importantly they prayed together. There is saying that says a family that prays together stays together. Not sure how true that is, but there is power when the body of Christ comes together and prays. I am an advocate of our Wednesday night Prayer service. I believe strongly in prayer, prayer is the key to our Christian life. Where two or

three are gathered in His name, there he is in the midst. In a book called Fresh Wind Fresh Fire Jim Cymbala, says, “prayer will get you to the gates of heaven but it is your faith that will unlock the door.”

2. Unselfishness- The First Century Church was an unselfish church. The Bible says in verse 45, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. How amazing would that be if the people of the church will rally behind people in the church and helped them out financially. They sold what they had brought it to the storehouse and distributed evenly amongst the body of Christ. No one was left out, no one felt as if they had more or less than someone else. I believe this is critical in our church. The model is to be unselfish with the things that you have in order to be a blessing to someone else. At San Bernardino Community we have a community service program that exemplifies the early church. Within our community service ministry we have food, clothes, showers, and assistance with bills and other things. I would like to become more robust so we can help more people in the church and outside of the church.
3. Visitation-Verse 46 of Acts 2 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. The disciples just did not minister in the temple but also in the homes of their members. When we read the life of Jesus we notice that his ministry was done primarily outside of the temple, whether on the Mount of Blessings, or the Graveside of Lazarus, or in the home of Simon. The ministry of Jesus was modeled by the first century church going into the homes of their members and enjoying a good meal and talking about the goodness of the Lord. I

was in the Philippines holding a major evangelistic campaign. The brethren at first must not have thought I was a good pastor. They knew I was a good preacher but they did not think that I was a good pastor. They said in the Philippines the Pastor should have big stomachs. That is a sign that they visit their members. Because every house they go to they would provide a meal for them. So, the more you visit, the more you eat, the bigger your stomach gets. I truly believe in visitation in getting into the homes of the people. When you are in their homes you can have more intimate conversation and in depth prayer. It builds the church and it builds the leadership. I and my first elder is putting together a visitation plan for the church, because I can't do all the visitation. Each elder however will visit and report back to me.

4. The Church must stay open-in verse 46 it says, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple. It shows that the temple was open every day, whether it was for teaching, praying, or counseling the doors of the church were open. I truly believe that they are qualitative results when the church is always open. I believe that churches should be open 7 days a week. Membership should know that they can come to the church during normal work hours and after as well, maybe an 8:00 to 8:00, to come and see a Pastor an elder or someone just for prayer or conversation. I don't like it when I google my church it says Sunday-Friday church is closed but on Saturdays open. If I was looking for a church I would not come to my church because, according to google it is only open on Saturdays for 2 hours. I am trying to change that! I am working on a plan to have the church open 7 days a week. There would be a school, after school program,

recreation in the gym, counseling sessions, prayer room etc. Like previously mentioned I don't have hard data to prove what happens when the church is open every day I just know from reading and experience that it changes the atmosphere of the church when things are going on.

I truly believe Acts 2:42-47 gives the model on how church ought to be The last of verse I believe summarizes everything, "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. When you follow the biblical model your church will grow spiritually as a result the church will grow numerical.

If the Biblical model is so clearly stated, then why is church on the decline?

What are some practical ways we can utilize the Biblical Model and numerical build the church? I have coined a new phrase, "The Trinity of Ministry." Within my church I teach about the trinity. God the father God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit. God in three persons, different functions but one purpose. So, it is with ministry a trinitarian perspective: Leadership, Evangelism and Discipleship. I truly believe that this is a practical way to fill those empty seats in the church. In fact, the trinity of ministry parallels with the Triune God. God the Father is the the Leader. The visionary is the one we pray to the one we sent His son Jesus, John 3:16. God the Son, Jesus Christ is the Evangelist. Jesus came to this earth to preach salvation and the kingdom of heaven. Lastly The Holy Spirit is the One who leads us to a healthy Christian life. He is our comforter. He helps us to walk in newness of Life. So, let's take a look at the practical application of the trinity of ministry.

Leadership: The Bible says, without a vision the people perish. Each Pastor must hear from God and set the vision and mission for the church. The Pastor has to allow time for people to buy into the vision. So, my recommendation is preach, teach, and exemplify the vision and mission even before you share it with the church. Write everything out that God has shown you, preach sermons and have lessons and ministry that showcase the vision that God has placed on your heart. The people will begin to buy in without them knowing it is the vision God has placed on your heart for the church. Wait for about a year then share the vision and mission in a written form with the church. Within that year it also gives you time to confirm what God has told you. To continue to have one on one conversations with the Lord to see if there was anything you missed or you need to add or tweak. The vision should be shared with 1 to 3 close people that can also help you in that first year. After the vision has been set then it must be executed. Executing the plan God has set is critical. Leadership must stay focus! We are in a spiritual battle, so the vision God has placed on you will not be executed without opposition. But if God is before you who can be against you?

One of my favorite stories is when Moses was at the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army was behind him. God placed a vision in the heart of Moses to free his people from bondage of pharaoh and the Egyptians. Well the time had come they were emancipated not by conciliation by pharaoh but by God's might. They have now come to a dead end the Red Sea. The people began to complain to Moses, saying that they should have stayed in Egypt. Even though they were being mistreated they would have preferred to live in bondage instead of taking a chance with Jehovah. They lacked faith, but Moses did not he cried to the Lord God told him that He would deliver Him. Moses then stretched out his

rod and the sea opened up. As leaders we will always face opposition but we must be confident in the vision God placed inside of us and when it appears that we are stuck between a rock and a hard place. When Pharaoh's army is behind you the red sea is in front of you, we as leadership must stretch in faith symbolizing that you believe that God will extend the vision it's not going to die but God will keep it alive. Here is what I have given to my church the 2018 church booklet.

Evangelism- Matthew 28:19, 20, Jesus says, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded and Lo I am with you always even until the end of the age." Jesus commands us to share the Gospel to all the world. This is evangelizing, sharing to a dying world that Jesus is the solution to every problem and soon He will place His government here on this earth. Every church should host revivals and evangelistic campaigns. A revival is more geared to the church but an evangelistic campaign is geared to the community. I have done evangelistic campaigns in different parts of the world and the country. Jesus says, "If I be lifted up I would draw all men unto me. When we wage war against the enemy God is right there. Jesus did it, the early church did it, and we also need to do it. Baptize people win souls for Jesus, this will bring people into the church and fill up those empty seats.

Discipleship - After you set the vision, after you bring new people in everyone must be discipled. Discipleship is a lifetime process; it is daily growing with God. Under the curriculum of discipleship the pastor is intentionally giving his/her members tools on how to have a love relationship with Jesus. When one is taught and has a love relationship with Jesus they will catch fire and begin to share the gospel with people all

around. They will produce disciples. As a result, you have a healthy church. This is a process church growth does not happen overnight. I know we read that in Acts that 3000 people were added, but remember the process started 3 and half years ago with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Peter is tagged with the one that won 3000 souls but it was Jesus who planted, Peter watered, and God gave the increase. The key to no more empty seats is discipleship. Leadership and Evangelism can fill your pews, but remember it is no more empty seats filling your church with filled people. Discipleship fills the people with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 5: GETTING TO KNOW THE PASTOR

There are many different competencies that one could have to fulfill this vision of No More Empty Seats. Myself I believe I have many core competencies but I will talk about the top three ministerial competencies and how I apply that to Ministry.

Leadership- Throughout the entire book leadership keeps on coming up. Well because leadership is key. People will only go as far as their leader. Leadership is patience, is using wisdom, it is organizing people to make a positive change. A Leader is one who creates an environment in which the gifts of the Spirit may flourish. He or she is effective in empowering others to realize their own calling or gifts and facilitates to listen and respond, the capacity to take the initiative when appropriate the ability to delegate responsibility to capable people, and the sensitivity to share resources. The goal of a leader is I am one that:

1. Has a willingness to learn from others.
2. An ability to communicate an overall sense of direction and to enable others to accomplish it.
 - I have a consistent ability to follow through on plans.
 - I have a willingness and ability to take initiative when appropriate.
 - I have a willingness and ability to delegate responsibility to capable people.
 - I have respect for talents and abilities of others, and ability to facilitate their exercise effectively.
 - I have the ability to motivate others to achieve their best efforts.

- I have the ability to provide support and to follow-up on the initiatives of others.
- I have the willingness to show appreciation for a job well done.
- I have the ability and willingness and/or ability to share knowledge and resources.
- I have the ability to give constructive criticism effectively.

There are three strategies that I like to use as a leader

Strategy 1: As the leader, my first task is to cast the vision.

Strategy 2: Communicate the vision in a way the church will buy into the vision.

Strategy 3: Create an environment where the church could be empowered to utilize their spiritual gifts. Being empowered by using their spiritual gifts they will help move the church forward.

At the end of each year I evaluate myself by determining if the vision is coming flourishing and if the church is attaining certain goals. I also believe I ought to hear from a people so I am working on creating a survey for the church if they are all involved in active ministry.

Prophetic Agent-A prophetic agent is one who speaks the truth in love to the church and the community. Also a prophetic agent is one who speaks truth to power. Prophecy in the Bible is more than a matter of ecstatic speech uttered through the power of the Spirit, and much more than merely telling the future. A prophet is one who does not “foretell” so much as “forth-tell” the truth. As a prophet, a minister speaks the truth in love, communicates an awareness of social injustices, and sensitizes others to spiritual and ethical implications of various structures and practices in the church/synagogue/mosque/religious community, and in the wider society.

As a Prophetic Agent I am:

- Committed to the transformation of the world.
- Sensitive to and/or empathy with victims of social justice.
- Skilled in analyzing social structures and the ability to diagnose the roots of social problems.
- The ability to translate intuitions about needed change into specific strategies.
- The ability to discern the ethical implications of strategies for change.
- A willingness to embrace risk in order to create social change.
- I have the ability to communicate to others passion for justice to inspire change.
- I have the ability to involve others in the process of seeking social change, to create group ownership, and to build coalitions.
- I have the awareness of cultural location and biases, and of the global implications of commitments and/or actions.

Below are some strategies that I use at my church to show the prophetic agent.

Strategy 1: Every Wednesday and Saturday, preach sermon that are spirit filled Christ centered, and prophetically based.

Strategy 2: Hold one, two, or three-week revival that will revive the church and bring people from community. The messages that are preached will communicate an awareness of social injustices and call to action for the kingdom of God which is at hand.

Strategy 3: Have small groups Bible Studies for those who want to dig deeper into the Word and its application to where we are today in earth's history.

With these goals I have an evaluation: I evaluate these goals by measuring it through the lenses of church growth on Saturday's Wednesday's and other Bible Study times.

Lastly, I have the ministerial competency of Pastoring. Pastoring is a lost art but by being a pastor you, can retain many people. One of the most common images or models of ministerial leadership in both Christian and Jewish traditions is that of the Pastor, or shepherd. It is a model of ministry that derives directly from God. Psalms 23 tells us that the Lord is our Shepherd. In the pages of the New Testament, Jesus appropriated this image to describe his own method of ministry and leadership. One of the earliest and most enduring images in Christian art is of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

As a Pastor I am:

- Caringly administers the sacraments and ceremonies of the community.
- I visit those who are ill, whether in the hospital or at home, including chronic shut-ins.
- I spend time and comfort those who are bereaved.
- I welcome encourage and involve newcomers, christ and future long time members, seek contact with inactive members.
- I understand and practice soul care.
- I understand and practice self-care.
- There are some three strategies that I like to use as a Pastor:

Strategy 1: Putting together a visitation plan. The purpose of the visitation plan is to meet with the families of the church so that they know I care about their needs. Also praying and visiting all those who are sick and in the hospital.

Strategy 2: Have more frequent visits/meetings with those who are new into the faith. Care more intently for their needs as they make a transition to a new life with Christ.

Strategy 3: Having the attitude that I am not just the pastor for my church but the pastor for the whole community. So when community member needs funeral services they could use the church and I can officiate. Any social justice issues, educational issues my church then can come to for guidance.

The evaluation for these goals will be done by the congregations. An evaluation form will be created and asked by the congregation to fill them out.

CHAPTER 6 EXECUTE

In this last chapter, I will describe and discuss all what we did in 2017 and what we will do in 2018 to fill the seats of my church with filled people.

January

I believe in the power of prayer! When God's people pray things happen. So, I wanted to start the year of right and in the second week of the year we had a one week prayer revival. Each night I had the elders preach a sermon on prayer. Then after each sermon I lead the church into a prayer specifically for the things that we want to see happen at the church.

February

As mentioned earlier in this book, SBC is surrounded by 4 schools in less than a mile from the church. So, we decided to do something for the children. So, in February we had a puppet show for the kids. The name of the show was Fruit Troop. A church in Tucson Arizona goes all around the United States putting on a Christian Puppet Show for kids. Honestly, the show is geared to the children but the parents (including myself) love it just the same. There was great advertisement through the city and other SDA churches. I had a team of people passing out flyers at the school. It was great! On that Friday evening, the church was jammed packed. At least 300 people filled our church, kids and parents, church goers and non. The show was awesome everyone enjoyed the show. At the end of the show we were able to connect with a family who lives in the neighborhood

and their son goes to one of the local schools. This was the first big event that we hosted for the church that included my local community and the broader SDA Community. I as well as many others called that Friday night a success!

March

I think of spring, from a church setting I always think about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I normally do a revival but this year I just concentrated on Resurrection Sabbath. Within the SDA churches, since our worship services are on Saturday we normally celebrate the resurrection on that day instead of on Sunday's. So, resurrection Sabbath was an anointed one. The elements of worship were pretty much all the same but the two major differences were: the music and the attire of the pastor. I asked my good friend who directs a big choir in the city of San Bernardino to come and give us three selections. The church has never had a choir like that come to the church. I did not tell my friend anything about the church in terms of style of music, audience, culture, I just told him to move as the Spirit moves him. And that is exactly what he did. The first song that he sang was a song with a Caribbean sound. As mentioned before there are many Caribbeans in my church, and they just loved the music! They embraced him and the choir from that point forward.

When I preach I will either wear a dark colored suit or a robe. However, on this particular Sabbath, I didn't do either. I wore a suit, but it was an all white suit. Now, the Sabbath leading up to resurrection Sabbath I told the church to dress in all white, no one really listen to me. But when they saw their Pastor in all white they were truly impressed. Now, I am not saying that looks grow a church or that looks brings an anointing. However, I think when there is uniformity and order that is led by the Pastor it sends a message to the congregation. Looking at the study of the sanctuary in scripture God was

very specific with what the High Priest would wear. Also each color and emblem on the robe of the High Priest had meaning. So, the meaning of white on resurrection Sabbath is victory. It's purity. God sent His son Jesus to die for our sins He did that on Friday, on Sabbath he rested and on Sunday he rose! Letting the world know that if you believe in Him. His blood will wash as white as snow. Isaiah 1:18, says "Come let us reason together, though your sins maybe red like crimson I will make them as white as snow."

May

In the month of May we had two special events. Like all churches with celebrate the mothers of our church. I believe even though all churches do it, it is a special time. If there are people who don't come to church normally, there are certain days they will show up and Mother's day is one of them. So, my elders took the lead on Mother's day Sabbath and made the mothers and ladies of the church feel very special. They gave them gifts, acknowledged the oldest and youngest mothers in the church, and ended the day with a nice meal for the ladies all done by the men.

Another special day we had in May was education day. Education day is the day we recognized all graduates in our church. It was a big moral boost for all people. For the graduates we wanted to show them that the church loves them and that we are proud of them. There were about 25 graduates from Kindergarten all the way to Medical Professionals. What it also shows to the church and the community is that we value education. As much as we want individuals to have a relationship with Jesus Christ! We want people to have an education so that they can get well paying jobs to provide for themselves, their families, help the body of Christ and be model citizens in the community. We had a phenomenal speaker a young lady who just completed her

Master's Degree and getting ready to get into a doctoral program. She is an international speaker and really inspired the church.

June

June was the busiest and biggest month of the year. June 10-July 05, were the biggest four weeks of our church. June 10th we were the host church to one of the four block parties that we have in San Bernardino. In 2015, there was a mass shooting at a regional center in San Bernardino. Along with that and all of the crime going on in the city the chief of police wanted to meet with all the Pastors in the summer of 2016. I went to the meeting; from that meeting we formed San Bernardino Pastors United (SBPU) San Bernardino Pastor United is a non-denominational organization of Pastors in the city of San Bernardino that want to make a difference in their city. So, one of the components of the San Bernardino Pastors United has to do with bringing peace back into the city. So, we started to do block parties in the different parts of the city. On June 10th, we utilized the baseball field at San Bernardino High School, which is directly across the street from my church. There were about 2500 people who came to this event, we gave out free food, there were a plethora of different vendors, there was a stage set up where my musicians played, my praise team sang, and I gave the message. Many people gave their life over to Jesus that day; many came down for the altar call to receive special prayer. That was truly an anointed day.

That night, June 10th at 7:00pm we started our 3 week public evangelistic campaign. For the last 6 weeks I had bible workers in the field knocking on doors, meeting people, having Bible studies with them, and passing out flyers. The theme for the campaign was "breakthroughs." We had a meeting each night except for on Mondays and Tuesdays and on Saturday's we had two meetings one in the morning and one in the

evening. There was spirit filled music each night, a powerful word, anointing service, gift give aways, and much more. At the end of the meeting the Lord provided for us a harvest of 30 new people into the church. God really, really blessed us!

July

The next day after our public meeting we had another revival for the Inland Empire. The Inland Empire consists of Riverside County and San Bernardino County. This was intentionally planned this way. One of the most current well known speakers of the SDA Church is Dr. Carlton P. Byrd, who is the Speaker Director of Breath of Life Television Ministries. He as scheduled to speak for all of the SDA Churches in the Inland Empire, Orange County, and San Diego County that Friday and Sabbath. So, I asked him to come early, for the Early Byrd Special! And special it was! Dr. Byrd preached 3 amazing sermons! The different music that we had was just anointed. The church was packed to capacity each night and after each service there was a time for fellowship in our outreach center. The community, the church are still asking when he is coming back. The Block party, Breakthroughs, and The Early Byrd special garnered so much positive attention to our church. As a result, more people are starting to know and love San Bernardino Community.

November

In the month of November, we had three major events. The first event was International Day. International Day was fantastic! One of my favorite scriptures is Revelation 7:9, 10. I believe if that is what heaven is going to look like, why don't we try our best to replicate it down here on earth? On International Day we had over 30 countries represented. From the Philipians, to Mexico, to Africa, of course the U.S. and many more. The entire church wore their native attire and together we celebrated Our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ creative power. We wanted to showcase unity through diversity. Out of many one nation. The Sermon and music was good. But on this particular Sabbath, everyone was anticipating the food! And it was worth the wait! On many intentional days, each country will bring food from their native country. This particular year, we focused on the Caribbean region. Which showcased food such as rice n peas, roti, ginger beer(non-alcoholic) and much more. People are still talking about the food that was served that day.

The second event that we did was the AMEN Clinic. AMEN stands for Adventist Medical Evangelism Network. This is one of the Medical Components of the Seventh-day Adventist in which they go all around the world working with churches and providing, free health dental and vision care. The event was written and published in different newspapers and magazines. Here is the write up from the Seventh-day Adventist Recorder:

Lastly, the third event we did was our annual Thanksgiving feeding. Over 200 people enjoy a turkey dinner provided by our community services department. There was a local football team who came to volunteer along with other volunteers from our church. The food was excellent, but also we gave out clothes and turkeys. This is an event the community looks forward to every year.

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Appendix B
Church Book



Pastor:
Jerrold N. Thompson Sr.

Service Times:
Saturday Mornings: 9:30 and 11:00
Wednesday Night 7:00pm

Website: SBCSDACHURCH.ORG
Facebook: SBCSDACHURCH
INSTAGRAM: SBCSDACHURCH

1696 North G Street San Bernardino CA 92405
909 883 2400

Vision, Mission and Motto

Vision: To bring about a positive physical, mental, and spiritual change in the City of San Bernardino that will be felt, seen, and heard through the city and the world.

Vision Text: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45 NKJV

Mission Statement: The members of San Bernardino Community SDA Church are saved to serve Christ, serve the church, serve the local and global community.

Mission Text: “For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see you a stranger and take you in or naked and clothe you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’”

Matthew 25:35-40 NKJV

Motto: Saved 2 Serve

Core Values: Christ Centered...Love...Respect...Diversity...Compassion

5 Major Goals:

To Have a God-Filled Church

That Every Member is Active in Service

Dream Academy

New Gym Floor and Electronic Sign

AMEN Clinic

Steps to fulfill the Vision and Mission

Evangelism

- Yearly Public Meetings
- Training for Soul-Winning
- Weekly Baptisms
- Media Publications
- Television Broadcast
- Radio Broadcast
- Quarterly Trac Attacks

Discipleship

- Weekly Prayer Sessions and Bible Studies
- Corporate Fasts and Spiritual Retreats
- Visitations
- Mentoring and Guardianship
- Seasonal Revivals

Outreach

- Day Center
- After School Program
- Community Services
- Prison Ministries
- Local and International Mission Projects
- Health Seminars
- Partnering with other entities for community improvement

Worship

Bible Based Powerful Preaching

Spirit Filled Magnetic Music

Life Changing Prayer

Heartfelt Testimonies

Leadership Development

Leadership Training

Motivating Ministries for Children and Youth

Continuing Education

Marketing

Billboards

Fliers

Invitation Cards

Social Media

Newspaper Ads

Results, Goals, and Positions

Results of the Vision

Vibrant Working Church

Church Growth

Inspirational Church Leadership

Church Unity

Service in the Community

Participating in Conference Events

Mission Driven and not Money Driven Church

Spirit Filled Church

Committed Church
Praying Church
Effective Communication
Increase in Tithes and Offerings

Goals for 2018

Have a God-Filled Church
Every Member Active in Service
Dream Academy
New Gym Floor and Electronic Sign
AMEN Clinic
Strong Communications Department
More Robust Community Service Department
New Camera System for the Church
Multi-Racial/Multi Cultural Church
More Drivers for the Van
Weekly Meals
Incorporate LLU Students in overall Vision of the Church
Vibrant Children and Youth Program

Positions for 2018

Pastor-Jerrold N. Thompson Sr.
First Elder-Weldon Allen
Head Deacon- Jonathan Allen
Head Deaconess-Janibell Francis
Sabbath School Superintendent- Celeste Brown
Church Clerk-Monique Allen

Family Ministry Leader- Augustine Panchoo

Women's Ministry and Prayer Ministry Leader-Amithy Smith

Men's Ministry Leader-Keith Smith

Children's Ministry Leader-Camille Clark

Music Ministry Coordinator-Nathan Lewis

Personal Ministries Leader- Shantane Marshal

Stewardship Leader-Ken Stagg

Hospitality Ministries Leader-Stella Jones

Community Service and Religious Liberty-Daphne Thorpe

Pathfinder Leader-Marvin Norman

Plant Manager-Phyllis Guy

Communications and Risk Management Leader-Sherrydon Alexander

Education Leader-Maia Edwards

Prison Ministries Leader-David Edwards

Treasurer-Paul Thorpe

Finance Committee and Inner City Ministry Leader-Enacio Hunt

Impact San Bernardino-Jorge Magana

2018 Church Calendar

January Prayer Focus

- 06-First Sabbath of the Year-Lunch Provided
- 13-Sabbath Service-Business Session
- 20-Sabbath Service- Ministry Training MT Rubidoux
- 27-Sabbath Service AY Program at Campus Hill
- 28-Ignite Leadership Training-La Sierra University

February Black History Month

- 03-Sabbath Service-MV/Evening Social
- 04-Fundraiser Breakfast
- 10-Sabbath Service-All Night (6pm-12am) Prayer Service
- 11th-Fundraiser Brunch
- 17-Sabbath Service
- 24-Sabbath Service-Lunch Provided/Afternoon Program

March Spring Revival

- 03-Sabbath Service-MV Program/Evening Social
- 10-Sabbath Service-Wintley Phipps Concert
- 17-Sabbath Service
- 24-Spring Revival (24-31)
- 31-Easter Celebration-Lunch Provided

April Ministry Month

- 07-Sabbath Service-MV Program/Evening Social
- 14-Communion Sabbath
- 21-Stewardship Sabbath-MV Program
- 28- Religious Liberty Sabbath-MV Program

May Ministry Month

05-USC Day-Lunch Provided

12-Mother's Day Sabbath-Lunch Provided

19-Education Sabbath-Lunch Provided

26-Sabbath Service

June Breath of Life

02-Sabbath Service-MV Program/Evening Social

03-16 Dr. Byrd Breath of Life I.E. Evangelism at Mt. Rubidoux

09-Sabbath Service

16-Sabbath Service

23-Sabbath Service

30-Campmeeting

July Youth and Children

07-Sabbath Service

14-Children's Day-Lunch Provided/MV Program/Evening Social

21-Sabbath Service

28-Youth Day-Lunch Provided/MV Program/Evening Social

29- Backpack Give Away

August Evangelism Preparation

04-Sabbath Service-MV/Evening Social

11-Sabbath Service

18-Sabbath Service

25-Sabbath Service

September Evangelism

01-Sabbath Service-MV/Evening Social

08-Communion Sabbath

15-Evangelism

22-Evangelism

29-Evangelism-Lunch Provided

October Discipleship

06-Sabbath Service-Lunch Provided/MV Program-Evening Social

07-SECC Elections La Sierra Church

13-Sabbath Service

20-Sabbath Service

27-Sabbath Service

November Thanksgiving

03-International Day-Lunch Provided

10-Sabbath Service

17-Sabbath Service

18- Community Thanksgiving Feeding

24-Sabbath Service

December

01-Loma Linda Academy-Lunch Provided

08-Sabbath Service

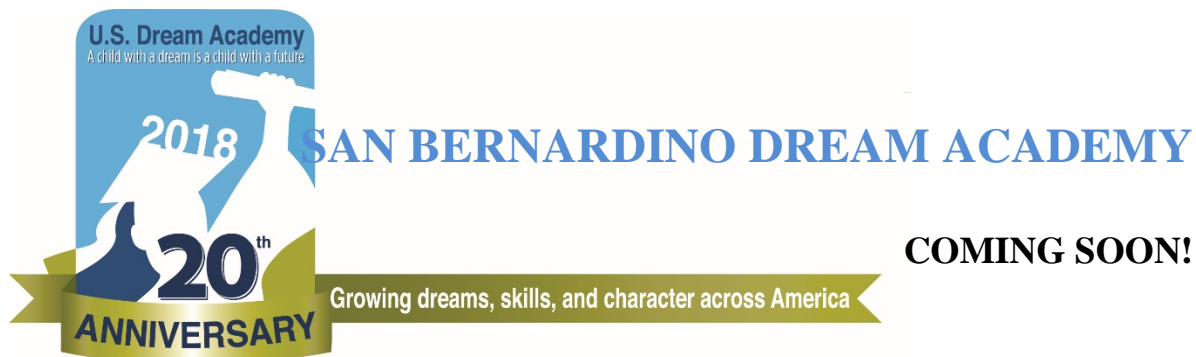
15-Sabbath Service

16- Community Toy Drives

22-Sabbath Service

29-Sabbath Service-4:00pm Joint Communion 16th Street

Appendix C Dream Academy



U.S. DREAM ACADEMY

MISSION

To inspire and elevate the lives of children of incarcerated parents and vulnerable young people through high performance relationships with caring adults. We seek to maximize their potential by building dreams, perseverance, academic skills and character.

VISION

To build an army of inspired, skilled and character-driven young people to become global leaders equipped to solve complex problems and innovate.

CORE VALUES

Faith, Freedom, Inspiration, Integrity

The U. S. Dream Academy (Dream), established in 1998, is one of the country's oldest after school and mentoring organizations serving children of incarcerated parents and those in high-risk environments. Currently, Dream serves youth from grades 2 through 12 in Learning Centers in seven cities nationwide. We focus on three programming pillars – character-, skills-, and dream-building – to nurture the whole child. Over the past 20 years, Dream has served nearly 10,000 students and recruited over 4,000 mentors.

We are moving forward with efforts to establish a new Dream Academy Learning Center in San Bernardino, CA by Fall 2018. The program location has been secured at San Bernardino Seventh Day Adventist Church and we are working closely with Pastor Jerrold Thompson, community leaders and local schools in the surrounding area.

Relevant Local School Demographics & Proficiency Levels**

		Math		English				
SCHOOL	% Low	School	State	School	State			
	Income	Ave	Ave	Ave	Ave	Latino	Black	White
Brown El.	92%	16%	38%	27%	49%	75%	11%	6%
Riley El.	97%	36%	38%	37%	49%	85%	8%	3%
Arrowview MS	96%	19%	38%	36%	49%	82%	12%	3%
SBHS	95%	16%	38%	54%	49%	81%	12%	4%

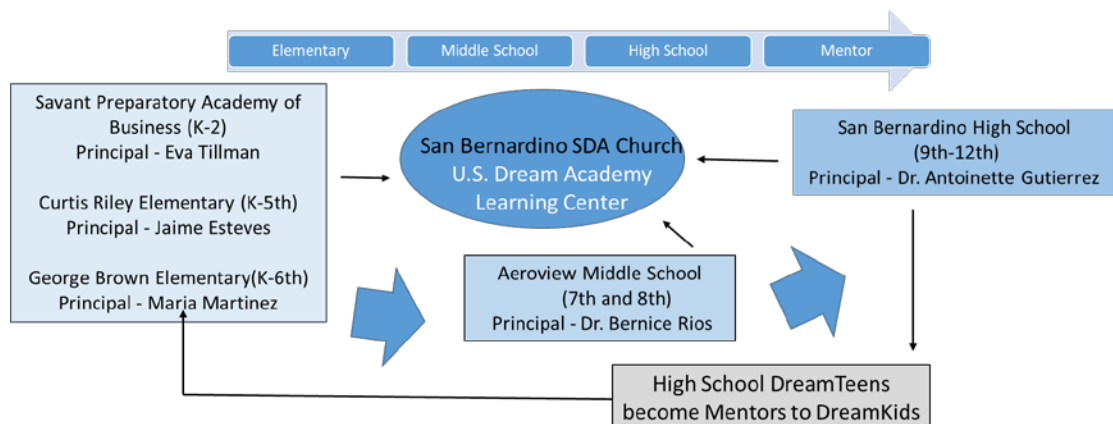
** Savant Prep is a brand-new school and does not yet have sufficient data for comparison

Livability Rating for Crime - F

- The overall crime rate in San Bernardino is 96% higher than the national average; 85% higher than California
- For every 100,000 people, there are 15.2 daily crimes that occur in San Bernardino.
- San Bernardino is safer than only 3% of the cities in the United States.
- San Bernardino is on the Forbes Top 10 Most Dangerous Cities to Live
- In San Bernardino you have a 1 in 19 chance of becoming a victim of any crime.

Local School Partnerships Established to Create a Mentor Pipeline of Support

We have secured support/interest from the principals of five nearby schools, all within two miles of each other and/or the church/hub site. These schools are a pipeline for us to establish a continuum of support for students who join in elementary school and will be supported all the way through high school graduation.



The establishment and roll-out of the San Bernardino Learning Center will benefit from our many years of experience operating in conjunction with local schools throughout the country. Five years ago, we piloted a high school expansion project in our Orlando Learning Center, and we have achieved impressive results in working with high school students. Our Dream Teens there have a **92% on-time high school graduation rate**, and we have developed workshops to help with the transition to college. We have also recently expanded a workforce development program in Orlando that we plan to replicate for our high school students in San Bernardino.

At every step of the way, our lengthy experience and culturally- and developmentally- sensitive curriculum will allow us to provide unique and effective support for currently underserved students in San Bernardino. Our local connections will play a significant role in outreach and recruitment for both students and mentors. Our model also includes volunteer opportunities for high school students to mentor younger students, to help them give back as well as develop leadership qualities and experience.

Upcoming Events: March 10 – 11

- Fundraising Concert San Bernardino SDA Church: March 10, 2018 featuring Wintley Phipps
- Fundraising/Networking Brunch hosted by board member Sheila Hodgkin: March 11, 2018
- Purpose of Events: Launch fundraising effort to secure 3 years of financial support
- **Proposed Program Launch Date:** August 2019 (if funding is secured)

Appendix D

Newspaper Write-ups

San Bernardino/Loma Linda Chinese Collaborative Health Clinic - Sarah McDugal⁴²

In November more than 700 patients were treated at a free health clinic when the Loma Linda Chinese church and the San Bernardino Community church partnered together to serve the San Bernardino community.

It all started when the Loma Linda Chinese church dreamed of giving free health care to their community, but they didn't know where to start. "We've hosted a lot of free health screenings over the years," says Kazar Ackerman, associate pastor, "but this time we wanted to do more than just diagnosing. We hoped to impact the community by actually treating health issues. We also wanted to be free to share the gospel while doing so."

Over lunch one day, Ackerman discovered that Pastor Jerrold Thompson, Sr., at San Bernardino Community church, was working on a similar idea. The two chatted about their shared vision, discussed venue possibilities, and agreed to combine efforts for a large scale community clinic. Eventually, Yen Ang, event coordinator, asked the Adventist Medical Evangelism Network (AMEN — <https://amensda.org/>) to provide medical and dental professionals.

Organizing a clinic of this magnitude naturally presented challenges, such as meshing two vastly different cultures — Chinese and African American. But a spirit of unity and seeing each other as God sees, helped volunteers to put cultural differences aside and successfully organize the clinic. The two churches developed a great working relationship.

More than 400 volunteers from both congregations and the community collaborated for a wide variety of treatments including: medical dental and vision care, as well as services such as legal, mental health, physical therapy, chaplaincy, and lifestyle and nutrition education. Providers from the county and private organizations gave free support.

This event connected organizers to many other churches and organizations who got involved in the free clinic. Now, doors are open for more health clinics and community services in the future. Leaders are discussing how to host similar activities more frequently as a result of the overwhelmingly positive experience.

"I believe this collaborative model should be integrated across North America," says Pastor Jerrold Thompson, San Bernardino Community Church, "where pastors of all ethnicities and backgrounds share their mutual service visions and partner together to benefit their communities and build up the Kingdom of Heaven."

⁴² Sarah McDugal, "San Bernardino Community and Loma Linda Chinese Churches Collaborate Health Clinic," *Southeastern Conference of Seventh Day Adventists*, January 19, 2018, https://secc.adventistfaith.org/news_entries/8345 (accessed April 20, 2018).

Yen Ang, 2017-11-28 at 13:51:03

This isn't Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or Black Friday. But it was just another workday in the Fall; a very chilly morning on Friday, Nov 10th.

By about 6 am, a couple of hundred people had already lined up on the street, outside of a church on the cross roads of the 17th and G street in San Bernardino.

It was an unusual sight, as these people are not members of the church, nor do they have any relation to the church.

The same scene repeated on Sunday, Nov 12th, except this time, the line was longer, maybe up to 500 people. People waited in line as early as 2 am, some with children or babies, wrapped up in warm blankets.

They waited in line patiently so that they could get their teeth cleaned, extracted and/or cavities filled. They came to get their eyes examined and then to go home with prescription glasses; They came to get flu shots, HIV screening, Hepatitis C tests, seek medical advice about their medical conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure, and even to receive legal counseling about their immigration, all at no cost.

These people represent hundreds and hundreds of people living in San Bernardino County who are medically uninsured or under-insured. One in 5 people in the county (which happens to be one of the poorest counties in California) live under the poverty line.

Members of the Loma Linda Chinese Seventh-day Adventist church, together with the members of the San Bernardino Community Adventist Church, decided it was time to do their bit as fellow citizens to reach out to this under-served population in their neighborhood in San Bernardino.

These two ethnically diverse groups of people—one group is predominantly Chinese while the other group African-Americans are color blind when it comes to helping people.

While they know they cannot solve all the problems faced by the impoverished community, they thought they could start by meeting some of the immediate needs of the people, specifically in the area of dental and vision care that is not accessible to them through no fault of their own.

For two days on Nov 10th, and 12th, these two local churches, in partnership with the San Bernardino Public Health Department, led a team of 400 volunteers, which included about 40 dentists and dental students, dozens of medical doctors, 2 ophthalmologists, 5 opticians, a few pharmacists, and hundreds of medical and non-medical professionals.

Together, they served over 800 residents in the community through the AMEN Free Clinic.

Over the weekend, more than 400 dental procedures, and 200 eye examinations and 200 pairs of prescription glasses were provided. Free flu shots, HIV and Hepatitis C screenings were given.

No identification was required to receive treatment, and service was rendered on a first-come first-serve basis.

The mayor of the city of San Bernardino, Mr. Davis, as well as the Assembly woman Ms. Eloise Reyes visited the clinic. Both were impressed by the extent of the free services provided and the response from the community.

Over \$200,000 worth of medical procedures given by 6,400 man hours over 2 days may seem to be enormous, but it is a drop of water in the ocean as far as meeting medical needs of the poor in San Bernardino is concerned. Is it worth it? One woman who has suffered from diabetes for over 10 years came because of her impaired vision--a common co-morbidity of uncontrolled diabetes. She had been denied eye care because she could not get insurance to pay for it. But on Sunday, Nov 12th, she was grateful beyond words because not only did she get her free glasses, she also got her tooth fixed, blood pressure checked, and received diet counseling about her diabetes.

A woman who suffered from tooth decay for a long time and finally was able to have all 3 bad teeth removed was almost in tears after the procedures.

A couple who arrived at the scene at 2 am were the first in line to see the dentist. About 8 hours later, their teeth were fixed. I asked them if their wait was worth it? Yes, they said. Because they could smile again.

Many lives have been positively impacted. How can it not be worth it?

Over \$200,000 worth of medical and health care provided by 6,400 man-hours.

Lives touched: priceless.

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